

Horror in Culture & Entertainment

RUE MORGUE



Unmasking
the Legacy of
**The Phantom
Opera**

117 NOVEMBER 2011 CAN/US \$6.95



THE GOLDEN AGE OF TV FRIGHT FILMS • THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE 2 • BONE CHURCHES OF THE WORLD • DR. PHIBES A NEW NOVEL

EVIL DEAD II • 2011 TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL • THE WEIRD TALE • FRANK HENENLOTTER



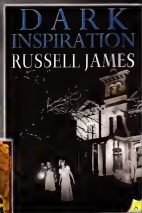
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NOVEMBER 22

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF **THE MACHINE GIRL** AND **TOKYO GORE POLICE**

YOSHIHIRO NISHIMURA'S

HELLDRIVER



RUE-MORCUE

NOVEMBER 2011 ISSUE #117

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The story behind 1925's *The Phantom of the Opera* is as ugly and elusive as the character himself. The man behind the film's latest incarnation delves into its legacy. PLUS! Carlo Lazzarini, the last surviving cast member of the original *Phantom*, recalls the making of a masterpiece, and composer Gabriel Yared looks back on more than twenty years of performing his acclaimed live score.

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NOTE FROM UNDERGROUND

There's something very satisfying about featuring *The Phantom of the Opera* in the same issue as the sequel to *The Human Centipede*. While the films may seem worlds apart, they're really both freak shows. And, like the literal freak shows that existed in tents before the invention of cinema, their success resides in the build up and payoff. Promise us something shocking and we'll buy a ticket, make good on that promise and we'll come back with friends.

Phantom—a product of the silent era with literary roots and a romantic Parisian opera house setting—has been enshrined as an immortal classic of the genre. At the time it was made, Universal labelled it a "Super Jewel" picture, boasting in press materials that it featured a faithful recreation of the Paris Opera House and had the weight of a major star (Lon Chaney) behind it. And just imagine what it was like seeing the film back then, when the moviegoing experience was often in the mould of live theatre—a proper night out, couched in gorgeous architecture, marbled bathrooms, evening wear, live music, a printed programme and those huge red curtains. It would've been a grandiose setting to witness Erik/The Phantom unleashed, his hideous visage assaulting viewers from a massive screen. There were, not surprisingly, reports of screams and fainting.

You can bet that the studio was happy to make that reaction public knowledge. Even though much of the spectacle of *Phantom* was created by the massive, ornate sets, amazing costumes and special effects (the colour tinge of the ball, for example), it was at its heart about morbid curiosity. Consider that the midpoint of the average film is the key spot for a big reveal. The exact midpoint of *Phantom* (at least the most well-known cut of it) features the unmasking. The film teases and builds to this point, and after Erik's face is finally revealed, it bursts into full-on monster movie mode. Universal suspected this is what audiences were really there to see, otherwise there wouldn't have been such lengths taken to keep the look a secret. The studio's previous success with Chaney, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, has no such big reveal. The triumph of *Phantom*, which originally received 90-95 reviews, affirmed to Universal that audiences wanted the freak show, and thus the seed was planted for the studio's famous monster movies. (Same goes for the *Human Centipede* sequel: the clever conceit of the meta-narrative and the performance of the creepy now lead are great and all, but we're in it to see a mass of twelve people stitched together ass-to-mouth, which is why the distributors aren't releasing any stills that let us get a good look.)

As our *Phantom* expert, Dave Shepard, points out, Chaney based the look of the character on the one described in the source material, Gaston Leroux's novel, and he doesn't put much stock into author David J. Skal's assertion (in his book *The Monster Show*) that Chaney's damaged visage was channelling the post-WWI influx of veterans returning home with facial wounds (billy common, do to soldiers being shot while peeking out of trenches). While Leroux's novel, which was written prior to WWI, obviously couldn't take a cue from these deformations, it's entirely likely that *Phantom*, at least subconsciously, represented a spectre of the war in Europe that continued to haunt society, as much as the public of the Roaring Twenties may have wanted to forget the cost of victory.

In *The Monster Show*, Skal juxtaposes a photo of *The Phantom* with an image of facially disfigured French war veterans of the time, known as *les visages de guerre*. The similarities are striking. Furthermore, the vital element of *Phantom*'s freak show was the tease in the form of that creepy mask with the painted-on eyes, and it bears a striking resemblance to the prosthetic masks made in France for the war-wounded to hide their wounded faces, as you can see above, with a WWI soldier with and without his mask.

A 2007 article for Smithsonian.com, called "Faces of War" (find it through Google), includes descriptions, photos and a short film detailing these painted tin masks, which were often held on the face with glasses. At a slight glance, from across the room, some of them were convincing (at least in the black and white footage) but were unimpressive up close. In the same way that a bad wig immediately draws the eye, these crude prosthetic devices only invited morbid curiosity.

At the same time, Hollywood was learning the value of the mask in horror films; whether they're hiding *The Phantom*, or *Phibes'* skull-like visage or Jason Voorhees' ugly mug, they've been a staple ever since the moment that Erik was revealed and audiences gasped.

As *The Phantom* himself proclaims, "Fess your eyes—glut your soul, on my accursed ugliness!" We did and we've been hungry ever since.



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RUE MORGUE #117 is dedicated to John Dunning, R.I.P.

COVER THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

Design by Darryl Pollen

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POST MORTEM

COMMENTS • QUESTIONS • CRITICISM



HALLOWEEN ISSUE of *Rue Morgue* looks AMAZING! Simply packed with [over] 100 pages of fandom, gore and goodness! "High fives"

DOORWAY2FANDOM, VIA TWITTER

I AM CURIOUS as to why you didn't mention the Halloween II (1981) blu-ray controversy yet? I'm sure you've heard by now that Universal removed Moustapha Akkad's name from the opening credits. The traditional "Moustapha Akkad Presents" credit is gone, instead we are treated to "Universal, An MCA Company Presents." The font doesn't even match, and Moustapha's name still appears on the packaging. What is your opinion on all this? I think it's wrong what Universal did. I was looking forward to this release, but this is a deal breaker for me.

CHRIS - NORMAN, OKLAHOMA

[We talk about it in the Halloween II review on p.44 - Ed]

AWESOME to hear new tracks from Midnight Syndicate playing on *Rue Morgue* Radio this week - thanks Tomb Oragmar!

CHAD SAVAGE, VIA TWITTER

I WAS DISAPPOINTED to see a *Red State* review left out of the *Fanbase* 2011 article on *RM115*. Would have liked to see *Rue Morgue's* opinion of it. Bo-urns

JESSE ARNISON, VIA FACEBOOK

[See p.38 for a full-length review of *Red State* - Ed]

RUE MORGUE, great article in *RM115* on the master of horror rock, Alice Cooper.

FRINGESOFHORROR, VIA TWITTER

DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK [*RM115*] was a breath of fresh air, it only the horror genre had more people like Guillermo del Toro.

ANTHONY WALKER, VIA FACEBOOK

THE MYSENDOFF.COM FAMILY would like to give our thanks to April Snellings for such a well-written and insightful article about the website. She is truly a gifted writer beyond what words can describe and we appreciate her time to craft an excellent article. Further, we appreciate the support and the time taken to include us in Canada's exceptional magazine. It's an honour and privilege, so again, to the team at *Rue Morgue*, the staff at mysendoff.com thanks you, and just as importantly, we thank April for her fantastic write-up.

MATTHEW - MYSENDOFF.COM

I JUST CAME BACK from watching the *Fright Night* remake (featured in *RM114*). Empty story, bad CGI effects, lame Evil Ed, no soul... Chris Sarandon would have kicked Colin Farrell's ass anytime. Stop fucking up your childhood classics, Hollywood!

SHAUN-FRANCIS KARCH, VIA FACEBOOK

GREAT RUE MORGUE covers make for great *Fright Fags* T-shirts. Of course, Coffin Joe helps.

HORRORFIGHTER, VIA TWITTER

REGRETTABLY I missed *RM113* and didn't even realize it until I saw it on the back issues page. A couple of weeks later, *Thriller Hunter* showed up on Netflix and was available for streaming. I figured, "Hey, this was an *RM* cover story, it must be pretty good, even if on the surface it sounds a bit silly." Well, once again, you guys can do no wrong. I loved it and I never would have watched it otherwise. Now I need to order the back issue.

DAN RICCHEZZA - REDDING, CONNECTICUT

HAVE SUCH high hopes for a daughter in March who is going to come into the world wearing a *Rue Morgue* shirt, with a *Fish* comic in her hands, and a demand to watch horror films every night with her dad (hey, a gay can hope, right?)

ERIC S. BROWN, VIA FACEBOOK

I'M A RECENT subscriber to your mag and I love every page! So I'm curious about what coverage of horror flicks I've missed in your past articles. There are three '80s movies in particular that I'm interested in since I last saw them as a teen many years ago. First, do you recall a 1985 HBO feature called *Fortress*? It's about a teacher and her students in Australia that get kidnapped for ransom. The second review I'd love to read about is the making of *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*. I recall seeing a lot of blood in that 1988 movie. Lastly, at least a twelve-page article covering *The Warriors*. Particularly how costume designers Barbie Maunier and Rose Clements came up with all those great names and logos such as The Furies, Gramercy Rifles, Electric Eliminators, Amsterdam All-Stars and E Street Blazers to name a few if only I had time to volunteer and write the article myself. Way to go, *Rue Morgue*!

ROBERTO LATINO - MORRISTOWN, NEW JERSEY

[One out of three ain't bad. There's a review of *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover* in *RM124* - Ed]

WOULD YOU RATHER WEDNESDAYS?
WEEKLY ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE



WOULD YOU RATHER have the Abominable Dr. Phibes play organ as you walk down the aisle on your wedding day, or have the Abominable Snowman rip the organ out of the ex-lover who hurt you the most?



Phibes, no question - but the Abominable Snowman would \$0 be invited to the wedding.

ELENA DESARMO

Wow, that's a tough call. But I'd have to go along with Phibes. I'm more of a de-jourselfer when it comes to ex-lover exorcisms.

DWIGHT KEMPER

You really have to ask that question? The snowman, of course! And while he's at it, he can rip the shit out of everyone within five feet of them.

BURDELL WOODLIN

I would ask my wife for a divorce just so I could marry her again with Dr. Phibes playing.

WILLIAM OUTCHES

Phibes, all the... hey waitaminute! Does this mean I have to get MARRIED??? Talk about HORROR!

DENK WILL

WE ENCOURAGE READERS TO SEND THEIR COMMENTS VIA MAIL, OR EMAIL. LETTERS MAY BE EDITED FOR LENGTH AND/OR CONTENT. PLEASE SEND TO: INFO@RUE-MORGUE.COM OR

POST MORTEM

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Headlines

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS HORROR HAPPENINGS

CANADIAN HORROR PRODUCER JOHN DUNNING DEAD AT 84

John Dunning, the co-founder of Canadian independent motion picture company Cinépix and a pivotal figure in the development of horror filmmaking in Canada, died on September 19, 2011, at 84 years of age. Though Dunning never fully recovered from a near-fatal bike accident in 2006, he continued to be active in filmmaking during the past few years.

Through Cinépix, Dunning and his partner André Link were instrumental in changing the landscape of the Canadian film industry. Although their company was probably best known for successes such as the comedy *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* and the acclaimed indie drama *Burrito 160*, the Montreal-based producers may have made their biggest mark on the horror genre, in the 1970s, they helped to kick-start the careers of many genre-focused filmmakers and producers, including David Cronenberg, Ivan Reitman, Don Carmody and William Friedkin.

"Without John, I don't think we would have a horror genre in Canada," notes director George Mihalko, who collaborated with Dunning on the seminal 1981 Canadian slasher *My Bloody Valentine*, among others. "He was the grandfather of all independent cinema in Canada, but he was the father of horror here too. I owe a great debt of gratitude to John, as well as André, for giving me my break."

Dunning initially formed Cinépix in 1962 to distribute theatrical films and soon brought on the Hungarian-born Link as partner. Link's financial aptitude was the perfect match for Dunning's creative impulses and Cinépix soon began importing exploitation and horror films that, at the time, had only recently been allowed into Quebec after a loosening of film censorship in the province.

"Dunning should not only be remembered as the sorely needed pioneer of Canadian genre production, but as a distributor who spent the 1960s priming the pump by bringing subterranean horror to Canadian screens," notes Gábor Várhelyi, author of *They Came From Within: A History of Canadian Horror Cinema*. "From *Carnival of Souls* to *The Astro Zombies*, there was scarcely a Z-level picture too weird or lowbrow for Cinépix Distribution to tackle."

Cinépix moved into production in 1968 with *Wahiné*, a French-Canadian exploitation effort that was a



John Dunning (left) and André Link co-wrote one of their many influential steps of cinema.

smash hit in Quebec. In the 1970s, the company became one of the country's only sources for horror, delivering *The Possession of Virginia* (1972) and *The Pyx* (1973) before redefining the Canadian take on the genre with *Shivers*, Cronenberg's 1975 debut feature. The film not only ignited the box office, but also triggered a political firestorm over the use of tax money to make horror films. Knowing they were on to something, Cinépix followed it with *Asa, She Wolf of the SS* (1975), *Death Weekend* (1976), *Robbed* (1977) and *Cathy's Curse* (1977) before offering up two undisputed slasher classics—*Happy Birthday to Me* (1981) and Mihalko's *My Bloody Valentine*.

"I will never forget John sitting behind his desk, his door always open, ready to listen to an idea, a pitch or a problem," remembers Mihalko. "With John, he either liked it or he didn't, but you always knew why and you were always welcome to give it another shot. And when you left it was like having completed

a semester of graduate school in a very pleasant hour or two."

Cinépix was purchased by Lions Gate Entertainment in 1997 and formed the basis for Lionsgate Films, where Dunning and Link remained at the helm. Since then, the pair have been increasingly recognized for their contributions to the Canadian film industry, recently garnering the Toronto Film Critics Association's Clyde Gilmour Award as well as a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2011 Fantasia International Film Festival.

"I'm not entirely sure if John was ever fully aware that he was known as 'Canada's Roger Corman,' but he more than lived up to the billing," says Várhelyi.

"John and André gave so many of us from all over Canada real opportunities to learn, work and grow in the profession we love," notes Mihalko. "They were mentors, and an example to all aspiring Canadian filmmakers that you can succeed in your own country."

PAUL CORUPE

SCREAM QUEEN BARBARA CRAMPTON RETURNS

Thanks to its smart take on familiar slasher tropes, Adam Wingard's home invasion shocker *You're Next* has been getting gangbuster reviews on the festival circuit. For many horror fans, though, the big story isn't the film's potential for breakout box-office success, it's the welcome return of actress Barbara Crampton to the blood-spattered silver screen.

Crampton, best known for her roles in Stuart Gordon's *Re-Animator*, *From Beyond* and *Castle Freak*, was all but retired from acting when she read the script for *You're Next*. "They didn't even want to meet with me first," she recalls. "They just offered me the part, which I thought was kind of nice. I really liked Simon Barrett's script. I thought it was very cool, but I had no idea it was going to get the kind of buzz it got in Toronto."

The buzz Crampton is referring to is the enthusiastic response the film garnered in September at the Toronto International Film Festival (see review on p.43) — a reception that led to a lively bidding war that saw Lionsgate come out on top with a reported seven-figure offer.

You're Next marks the 52-year-old actress' first major role after a self-imposed hiatus from movies and television in 2008. "It just made sense to take kind of a classic scream queen character and put her in this mature role," explains Wingard of casting Crampton. "Barbara was in retirement when we got her and she just worked perfectly. She's actually a totally brilliant actress. I think it's kind of funny because she got bitten by the acting bug again. ... She didn't have a Twitter account prior to this but she's the Twi-

ter queen now. She immediately picked it up and is totally savvy to it."

Crampton says she wasn't thinking about acting at all when she was granted the role of Aubrey, the matriarch of a family that comes under attack from a group of animal-masked killers. Instead, she has spent most of the last decade fine-tuning the role that has become the most important in her life: her full-time gig as the mother of two. Based on her experiences with *You're Next*, though, audiences can expect to see her name in the credits again soon.

"She went and got herself an agent because of this movie," says Crampton's co-star Shami Vinson. "'Babe is back!' is what we say."

According to Cram-

pton, her newly rediscovered enthusiasm for filmmaking was even a bit of a surprise to her.

"While I was making [*You're Next*] I realized, gee, motherhood's really hard and acting is really fun. Maybe if I threw a little bit of acting in there once in a while, it would relieve the pressure of just being a mom, although I love being a mom. My children are wonderful, and we have a beautiful life up here. But, yeah, I would consider doing more moviemaking, if they could all be as grand as this, then I'm in."

At this writing, the actress is in negotiations for at least one new project. As an avid horror fan, she is enthusiastic about her return to the genre and cites a few filmmakers she'd like to work with.

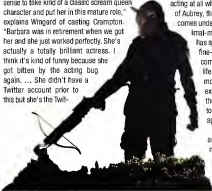
"I'm a little bit afraid of Rob Zombie, but I'd love to work for him anyway," she says with a laugh. "I'd love to work for Eli Roth if that's ever possible, and I'd love to work with Adam Wingard again any day, any moment, anytime."

APRIL SNELLINGS



You're Next (l. to r.) Barbara Crampton, Margaret Laney, Simon Barrett, Adam Wingard, Shami Vinson, Wendy Glenn and Rob Morse on the red carpet at the 2011 Toronto International Film Festival.

Photo by Ian Givens



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youtube.com/watch?v=rH0F0WCSk0
Step back into history with this black and white clip of Gus Edwards performing "Lon Chaney's Gonna Get You If You Don't Watch Out" from the musical-comedy *Hollywood Review of 1929*. While not terribly creepy in and of itself, it does shed some light on Chaney as an early horror icon.

mygortoncell.com

Award-winning author Ray Gorton (Screeners, Live Girls) has just launched his very first official website. Along with the usual bio and bibliography, there are links to his blog and various podcasts and articles featuring interviews about his extensive body of work. Better still, fans can interact with the scribe himself on the site's message board. Welcome, Ray!

zombieinfo.com

Zombies, those undead skinbags with more staying power than machines, are the focus of yet another website. While the news, interviews, reviews and convention coverage here is definitely flesh-eater slanted, there's also some love for other horror, sci-fi and cult properties, making this more than just another brain-eater destination.

sawofmassacre.blogspot.com

Bryce Wilson is a fan of Stephen King's non-fiction genre examination *Dance Macabre*, and he's writing the unauthorized sequel to it online, with in-depth looks at horror comics, video games, movies, literature and those who create them. Smarter than your average horror blog, Wilson's dedication to the genre is evident in every lengthy entry.

teapartyzombiesmusical.com

Those who view the US Tea Party movement as a political horror movie can unleash their aggressions with *Tea Party Zombies Must Die*, an online, first-person shooter that lets you blow the stuffing out of zombieified Fox News Channel personalities, such as Sarah Palin, Bill O'Reilly, Sean Hannity and Newt Gingrich. Look 'n' load.

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THE EXORCIST ADAPTED FOR STAGE

Forty years ago, author William Peter Blatty unleashed his novel *The Exorcist* on an unsuspecting public; in 2013, William Friedkin's legendary film adaptation celebrates its 40th anniversary, and sandwiched in between them will be a stage version of the infamous story. The Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles is preparing to bring the tale of a young girl possessed by an Asgarian demon to life on stage in the summer of 2012.

"The test gives you your template," says Scottish director John Doyle, who has been hired by the Playhouse to direct the production. "It is certainly not in any way trying to emulate the movie. I saw the movie in its first week of performances in the US, and it scared me to death."

This iteration of *The Exorcist*, set to have its world premiere on July 3, is adapted for the stage by John Pielmeier, who made his name in 1982 with the stage drama *Agnes of God*, about a nun who insults the child she gave birth to was the result of an immaculate conception. (It became a movie three years later starring Meg Tilly as Sister Agnes.) Though the struggles with faith explored by Father Damien Karras in *The Exorcist* will clearly be the production's main thrust, Doyle—who won a 2006 Tony Award for his staging of Stephen Sondheim's classic *Sweeney Todd*—understands the importance of the horror elements as well.

According to Doyle, Blatty has also been working closely with Pielmeier on the adaptation, though it's unclear if the play will draw on the new, "second draft" material Blatty included in the 40th anniversary edition of his book published by Harper in October.

"We are doing a workshop in the fall to explore all the possibilities of the text, and then we will seriously look at how to visually realize the piece," says Doyle. "It is obviously a long process and one that has to be taken very carefully when you are working with such iconic material."

His biggest challenge?

"Treating it in a unique theatrical way, and scaring people to death all over again."

A.S. BERMAN

ENTRAILS

➤ A faceless Facebook petition currently boasting more than 9300 signatures is requesting that Norwegian black metalist Varg Vikernes burn down the controversial Westboro Baptist Church in Kansas—best known for its strong homophobic stance and picketing of military funerals. In 2009, Vikernes was released from prison after serving fifteen years for burning four churches and murdering fellow Mayhem band member Øystein "Euronimus" Aarseth in 1993. The Facebook group states, "He's got one last burning left in him. Why not let him benefit the world?"

➤ Following DC's recent reboot of all of its comic titles, two of its spookiest heroes are being developed for television. *Supernatural* creator Eric Kripke is reportedly working on a series for The CW based on Deadman, the ghost of a murdered trapeze artist who can possess people at will. Meanwhile, Fox has already purchased a show based on The Spectre—the ghost of a dead cop who hounds criminals to justice—though details remain unclear whether this is merely for a pilot or several episodes.

➤ Creative, the directorial debut of CSI: Miami production designer Fred Andrews, has nearly set a new record for the worst theatrical opening in almost 30 years. The flick, starring Melissa Brooks (TV's *Five Bloods*) and Sid Haig, follows a group searching for a half-man, half-alligator in the New Orleans swamps, and averaged just \$217 per theatre in the 1507 theatres in which it opened. According to *BoxOffice-mojo.com*, only a 2008 feature-length pop rally called

Proud American and The Worst Movie Ever! have done worse.

➤ Freddy Krueger recently slammed US atomic energy worker advocates when a Labor Department training manual surfaced that uses a rendition of his name as a pseudonym in a case study of a worker who died on October 31 of "depression, dementia and skin cancer." Also in the manual: a pathologist named Hannibal Lecter. An official statement issued September 27 read, "We agree that the use of fictional characters with negative attributes could be perceived as insensitive."

➤ In September, during a speaking engagement at George Mason University in Virginia, Stephen King read a portion of *On Sleep*, his long-talked-about sequel to his 1977 novel, *The Shining*. A month later, the Dryden Theatre in Rochester, New York, was scheduled to show a rare, uncut version of Stanley Kubrick's filmic adaptation of *The Shining*, featuring four additional minutes excised from its original theatrical version shortly after release.

➤ St. Mary's churchyard in Whitby, North Yorkshire, recently banned photography in the cemetery after several complaints from residents. The English graveyard, made famous by Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*, has been a meeting place for writers to the twice-yearly Whitby Gothic Weekend since 1994. Event founder Jo Hampshire supports the ban, telling *The Northern Echo* newspaper that sometimes, "you get scarily-cold Gothos who are laid out across the gravestones."

A.S. BERMAN

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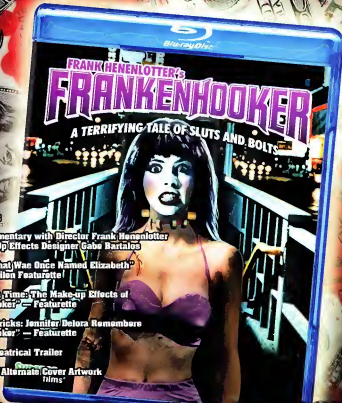


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- ★ "A Salad That Was Once Named Elizabeth" — Patty Mullen Featurette
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A pair of friends were arrested in Denver, Colorado, in September after taking their dead Canadian buddy to a diner, a bar and then a strip club, *Weekend at Bernie's*-style.

Juliet Marlen Hulme — who, along with her best friend, Pauline Parker, murdered Parker's mother in 1954 (a crime explored in Peter Jackson's 1994 film *Heavenly Creatures*) — went on to become a best-selling author after her release from prison. She's written more than 50 books in the historical, detective and crime fiction genres, selling upwards of 20 million copies cumulatively.

Earlier this fall, a Mexican drug gang dumped some 35 corpses into the middle of a roadway in Mexico City during rush hour, while several armed henchmen stood guard.

According to Bryan Sen's *A Year of Fear*, 1932's *Doctor X*, starring Lionel Atwill and Faye Wray, was the first colour horror film.

A cemetery worker in Allouez, Wisconsin, was recently charged with theft after entering a mausoleum and prying a custom Fender Telecaster guitar out of the hands of a dead man whose final wish had been to be interred with the instrument.

When Japanese heavy metal musician Hideto "Hide" Matsumoto committed suicide by hanging himself using a towel attached to a doorknob, at least two devastated female fans copied him.

During Thanksgiving weekend in 1981, former model Dinah Aree Nelson murdered, disemboweled, cooked and partially consumed her husband. The couple had only been married a month.

In her autobiography, actress Joanna Lumley recounts filming the scene in which she is dispatched via a stake in 1973's *The Satanic Rites of Dracula*, and how a visitor to the film's set that day fainted while watching the take.

Accused murderer Travis Forbes recently confessed to police that he worked his entire shift delivering baked goods in and around the Denver area while his victim's corpse rested in the back of the vehicle along with the foodstuffs.

Practicing Wiccans recently expressed their dissatisfaction with the portrayal of witches on the latest season of TV's *True Blood*, suggesting to Reuters in August that Marnie Stonebrook (Fiona Shaw), the show's evil Wiccan character, is damaging the reputation of real-life witches.

Police were called to break up a raucous Oktoberfest celebration in La Crosse, Wisconsin, after the crowd began tossing a dead squirrel back and forth like a beach ball.

Mike Raven, star of 1971's *Crucible of Fear*, a film he helped finance, also found success in the music industry, hosting his own radio show on the BBC and writing liner notes for soul records.

Noted Arab scholar and prolific author Al-Jahiz died in 869 AD when he was crushed to death by falling bookshelves in his library.

Compiled by MONICA S. KUEBLER

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4. **DEADLY EYES**
RAMPAGING RODENTS IN THE CINEMA
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The story behind 1925's *The Phantom of the Opera* is as ugly, elusive and fascinating as the character himself. The man behind the film's latest incarnation delves into its legacy

Overture of Fear

by James Burrell



It's one of the world's first horror blockbusters, it set the stage for the Universal monster movies of the early sound era, and it gave us star Lon Chaney's most recognizable and ghoulish visage – yet it's rather remarkable that 1925's *The Phantom of the Opera* exists at all, given its history.

Though marred by sluggish pacing, stilted direction and over-the-top, histrionic acting, *Phantom* earned its reputation as a classic on the strength of its remarkable art direction, set design, and extraordinary makeup and performance from star Chaney: It was wildly popular with audiences of the time, who thrilled at the terrors of Chaney's *Phantom*, swooned at the tragic romance and marvelled at just how big the whole thing was, most likely, while watching it in a lavish, early 20th-century movie house, accompanied by grandiose live music.

Based on the 1910 novel *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* by French author and journalist Gaston Leroux, the film features Chaney as Erik, a mysterious, masked composer lurking beneath the Paris Opera House while working behind the scenes to advance the career of beautiful, talented young singer Christine Daaé (Mary Philbin). Infatuated, he whisks her away to his subterranean lair far below the stage and professes his love. However, when Christine goes against his wishes and removes his mask, revealing his hideous face, the ill-starred "Opera Ghost" informs her that she's his, whether she'll like it or



Queen Maubere Erik (Lon Chaney) creates the Rat Manquin while dressed as the Rat Death, and (opposite) the actor in his classic Phantom mask up

not. He permits her to return to the opera, provided she does not meet with her beau, the handsome Raoul de Chagny (Norman Kerry). Soon, she breaks her promise during a lavish masked ball – a centerpiece of the film, featuring an early two-colour Technicolor process – and she's kidnapped by the jealous, hate-filled Phantom, who devises a plan to kill Raoul (and anyone else) who attempts to come between them.

Universal Pictures was then primarily known for making low-budget serials and westerns, and studio head Carl Laemmle devised Phantom as one of the company's "Super Jewel" films, meaning it was his most prestigious and expensive project of the year. Featuring lavish costumes and sets, including jaw-dropping full-scale reproductions of sections of the Palais Garnier (a.k.a. Paris Opera House), Phantom was intended to be a cinematic spectacle on scale with the studio's earlier hit *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923). That production featured a tortured performance from Chaney as the title character and Universal felt Phantom would also benefit from the unique talents of "The Man of a Thousand Faces."

Chaney's legendary design for Erik was surprisingly true to the character's description in the novel, in which he has a skull-like appearance. Since Chaney never revealed the secrets to the character's makeup, the actor's techniques have long been a source of speculation. It's generally believed that the tortuous methods he employed included pulling up the tip of his nose with either wires or a thin, translucent material called "fish skin", building up his cheeks with cotton and collodion makeup, pinning back his ears, and donning a set of jagged dentures. In true sensational fashion, the face of the Phantom was kept a secret until the release of the film. Unsuspecting audiences were said to have screamed and fainted during the unmasking scene. (Laemmle's niece, Carla, appeared in the film as a ballerina and recalls watching Chaney at work, see p 21.)

However, despite the effort and resources put into the production, it did not go smoothly. Director Rupert Julian is rumoured to have been a tyrant on set and tensions reportedly escalated to the point where not only did he and Chaney have to communicate through a go-between, but co-star Kerry was said to have tried to run over the director with a horse. With Chaney refusing

to take direction from Julian, it is widely believed that he wound up directing numerous sequences himself, including the unmasking.

Adding to Phantom's troubled history is the negative reception it received during two preview screenings, which resulted in reshoots and re-edits. Audiences at an initial Los Angeles preview in January 1925 panned the film for being too slow and depressing, so it was re-edited and several scenes were removed, including an ending in which Erik, overcome by emotion after being kissed by Christine, dies of a broken heart. Comedic scenes, and a rousing new finale in which the Phantom is chased by an angry mob through the streets of Paris, were shot by comedy and western film director Edward Sedgwick. However, when screened in San Francisco in April 1925, more unfavourable reviews led Laemmle to have the new footage (with the exception of the ending) scrapped. After yet more tinkering, the film went into general release in November 1925 to mixed reviews but huge box-office returns.

With the advent of "talking pictures" and the success of sound films such as 1927's *The Jazz Singer*, several members of the cast were re-assembled (without Chaney, who was at MGM at the time) to shoot scenes for a sound version remake of Phantom, which would be released in late 1929 and early 1930. The "silent" version of this cut is the one audiences are most familiar with today, as it was sourced for numerous home video releases. The 1925 version is also available, but because it has survived only in 16 mm form, the image quality is usually less-than-spectacular.

Despite its shortcomings, Phantom helped to usher in the Golden Age of Universal horror, has been remade and adapted for other mediums dozens of times and serves as a valuable window into the silent era of Hollywood filmmaking. Now, it's been restored once again for its first Blu-ray release (out this month from Image), on a disc that features three different versions of the film (including a high-definition transfer from an original 35 mm negative), various scores, including one from Montreal composer Gabriel Thibaudoux (see p 22); and a gallery of rare behind-the-scenes stills. The man heading up the project, noted silent film authority and preservationist David Shepard, has been the driving force behind the restoration of more than 150 classic titles for home video release and reveals why this milestone film still resonates.



Phantom Masquerade: The unnamed Erik Draven (Lon Chaney) makes his debut underground lab

You and your team have restored numerous silent classics, including *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *Nosferatu* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. How difficult was *The Phantom of the Opera* by comparison?

Well, we've been at it a couple of times now [for previous VHS, LaserDisc and DVD releases]. The present version that is about to be released was done from much better materials than we used before. So, it needed less work. What actually was done to it was not little frame-by-frame retouches. The high-definition transfer was done with far better material. It's three generations closer to the original negative than our standard DVD. What was done was it was put through an electronic process in which the algorithm is removed – anything

that shows up in just one frame – the idea being to get out any flecks and specks, which it did a great job of. Then we have the "Bali Masquerade" sequence of the film, which is in two-colour Technicolor. We have the original 35 mm material and it just looks like it was made yesterday. There were also other scenes in the film where there was hand-colouring and those are now in colour for the first time. Additionally, the whole film was tinted. I was able to obtain the original cutting continuity from Universal, which shows what colours were on what scenes when the film was originally released. And we followed the same thing they did.

Tell us a bit about how the tinting in the film is used to emphasize its effect.

The tints and tones were as much a part of the colour of the film as Technicolor. This started because the film [stock] was so slow and required so much light for exposure that they couldn't do night photography. So, they would film night scenes during the day, but in order to signify to the audiences that the scenes were supposed to be at night, they would dye the film blue. And then it was expanded from there so that fire scenes were dyed in red, interiors at night were amber, but scenes during the day were in a colour called "sunshine," which was sort of a yellow-green. Scenes of deep passion might be purple. Towards the end of the silent era, Kodak actually made pre-dyed stock in about a dozen colours so that the laboratory would be spared having to colour black and white prints.

Clearly, few people have spent as much time with Lon Chaney as yourself, so how do you feel about him in the film?

If you want my honest opinion, I think he was a great actor who was often in lousy films. I mean, MGM did the same thing with Greta Garbo. They have those wonderful people and they put them in pedestrian movies. And every once in a while, there's a great movie, which is the case with *The Unknown* or *Phantom*. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* could have been a great movie, with a better director. The script was for a great film, but [director] Wallace Worsley was not up to doing anything extraordinary. I think that Chaney was a very fine actor, but his vehicles are not all fine. He got trapped in a lot of mediocre stuff. In the case of *Phantom*, his performance is absolutely great. And then you've got Norman Kerry and Mary Philbin. [Laughs] They're serviceable, they're not bump into the camera, but they're not what you would call distinguished performers.

Because of initial negative previews, the film was reshot and re-edited numerous times. My understanding is that there were at least four different cuts, is that correct? Do any of the others exist?

I think that the only ones that still exist are the version that we used – in this case, in two different speeds – and the original silent version, which as far as we know only survived on 16 mm. Universal Pictures made a decision back in the late 1940s to save the money that would have been required to build some new vaults for the additional films they were accumulating by destroying all the old silent films and using those vaults over again. The only films that got saved of the silent pictures were ones that had a soundtrack added to them in the late 1920s, like *The Man Who Laughs*, or films which had been sold on 16 mm.



Rue Morgue surveys the most notable remakes of the 1925 film

Phantom power

by Eric Velliste

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (ARTHUR LUSH, UNIVERSAL, 1943)

A TECHNOLOGICAL SPECTACLE – the first of its kind for Universal Horror – this version stars Claude Rains (*The Invisible Man*) as the Phantom, here named Enique Claudin. It signals a significant departure from the Lon Chaney version, instead casting in on the popularity of musicals and costume melodramas of the time, with stars Mason Eddy as Raoul and Susan Foster as Christine. While the masked ball sequence is notably absent, Universal made sure to include the chandelier's fatal descent. This film also introduces the notion of the Phantom's disfigurement by acid, to be used in future versions.



“What makes the film work is **Lon Chaney and the **ART DIRECTION**, WHICH is **SPECTACULAR**.”**

David Shepard



So, really, these early fans of the film are responsible for saving it in a way.

When 16 mm came out in 1923, Kodak sold most of its products through a chain of Kodak retail stores. In each of those stores they put out what was called the Kodascope Library, which was 16 mm prints that you could rent. To do that, Kodak made deals with Fox, Warner Bros., Paramount and a number of independent companies. A competitor to Kodak in the 16 mm market was the Bell and Howell Company and they wanted to do the same thing. But the Kodak deals were exclusive, so Bell and Howell went to Universal and made a deal for 16 mm prints from the Universal library, calling it the “Show-At-Home” library. Universal would make prints on order, for any picture in which they still had a negative. So, most of the Universal Show-At-Homes, at least the early prints of them on the popular titles, are right off of the camera negatives. A fair number of Universal films survived, but only on 16 mm because of the existence of those Show-At-Home prints.

I also noticed different intertitle cards for each of the versions.

The intertitles are different, the shots are different, even the angles are different. In the 1920s, they used to shoot, for the most part, with two cameras. And they would, in many cases, do multiple takes. So, the 1925 version would be the “A-Camera,” “A-Take.” Then they would save the second camera of the “A-Take” as protection, because they used to make all prints from the original negative. If the original negative got damaged or chewed up or worn out, they had the ability to replace any or all of it with the original negative from the second camera, where the negative had never been cut. What seems to have been done is that, in 1929, Walter Anthony—who was editing the picture—started all over again from the unused second negative. So, it’s not the 1925 version altered; it’s a freshly edited version with fresh titles. In my opinion, it’s a much more skillfully assembled version. But there are people who prefer the older one, and prefer it because there’s a little more [footage]. I’m a professional film editor and I think that the 1929 version is vastly superior.

For those interested, will the 1925 release be remastered and transferred to high-definition as well?

I think that the UCLA has begun, or will be doing, a restoration of it because they have acquired a collection, which includes a number of—I believe as many as nine—original 16 mm prints of it from which it will be possible to get every frame of the film. They’ve also got a laboratory set up largely for the purpose of blowing 16 mm up to 35 mm and the work is just so good that when you take a look at the 35 mm prints they make, you wouldn’t know that the film has been blown up at all. I’m sure they will get around to *Phantom*, but I don’t know when.

In a key alteration from source material to screen, the film has Christine very fearful of being in Erik’s company, while in the original novel, the character is much more sympathetic towards him. Why do you think the filmmakers altered the story this way?

Well, first of all, with a silent movie, the picture is all you have. Obviously there’s no surprise

to it now because everyone has seen the “unmasking scene” or skills from it. But it must have just shocked the bejesus out of people in 1925. In that case, I would think they would want the character to react with as much shock as the audience experienced. Of course, if they hadn’t had quite so limited an actress as Pribin, they might have been able to do it more subtly [laughs].

The ending of the film, when the mob throws the Phantom into the Seine, reinforces the notion that Erik truly is a monster who must be destroyed. Why was it important that the film—and others made after it, such as *Frankenstein*—follow this narrative structure?

This is mere speculation, but it would just seem to me to be mere exploitation. You know, there was a song called “Lon Chaney’s Gonna Get You If You Don’t Watch Out” [released in the 1920s, by composer/songwriter Gus Edwards—see *Rocky*, p. 148]. So, here was a film for which a lot of the audience was going to be kids. It would be nice to know that once you got in your bed at night that the Phantom was not going to show up in your bedroom.

What were the lengths that Chaney and Universal went to in order to keep the look of the makeup secret?

Well, that was part of the original deal with Chaney, that there would be no publicity on the makeup. That was in his contract so nobody would see that image of him until they saw the film. All of those stills of Chaney with the makeup, while they obviously existed, were not released in 1925.

In his book *The Monster Show*, author David J. Skal suggests that Chaney’s films may have been a reaction to the physical deformities endured by soldiers during WWI. He notes that characters such as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*’s Quasimodo and *The Phantom*



THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA | REFERENCE: ERIC HARTWIG, EW.COM

HARTWIG RECASTS THE TALE for Victorian England, and wastes no time revealing Herbert, Lon’s ghastly, one-eyed day mask, covering his acid-scorched face. Aside from seeing bloodier *Phantom* film for the first time, the highlights here are the performances by Lon, who plays the monster as truly tortured and pathetic, and Michael Gough as Lord Ambrose D’Arcy, who gives us a shrewd, egotistical composer seemingly more concerned with the vacancy in the opera house’s box & than the premiere of his new opera. As a nod to the Universal version, the *Phantom*’s lair is inspired by the original film.



"It must have just shocked the bejesus out of people in 1925."

David Shepard

of the Opera's Erik have faces resembling those of mutilated soldiers coming back home to America from Europe. Do you feel that *Phantom* plays on fears or anxieties about disfigurement?

That's an interesting idea, I've never thought of that. But, by 1925, that might have been sort of unlikely, if you look at some of the other films. For example, big, successful films that dealt with WWI that were made at that time, like *The Big Parade*, where the principal character does lose a leg. The films certainly have a "war-as-hell" component, but they're not playing on fears; there was already a nostalgia for that patriotism that marked the war. With no reference except other movies, I would say that's a little bit of a stretch. I do think that what you're dealing with is a lot of conventions of Victorian melodrama carried over into the silent movies. *Phantom* is certainly a melodrama. And I think that in the case of Chaney's performance, I regard it as operatic. It is a grand, gestured performance and full of spectacular poses—which may sound pejorative, and I don't mean it to—but, for example, the scene where he has visitors and he goes out into the water; that is like something out of an opera.

Something longer than life...

Yes, I think that a lot of his performance is larger than life. You're getting a mixture of theatrical traditions that audiences at the time would have recognized and understood, carried over from older arts into the movies. To me, that's a more likely explanation than haunted visions from the First World War, seven years later. I think I would be inclined to look towards popular arts, rather than historic events for the influence.

The Phantom of the Opera is said to have been a very troubled production, reportedly due to director Rupert Julian's dictatorial attitude on set.

Yes, apparently Chaney would not take direction from Julian, and essentially directed his own performance, which is pretty unusual, because the vehicle was certainly Chaney's and you would think that he would have the right to demand whatever director he wanted. But Julian had been sort of a hero over at Universal because they had been making this film, *Merry-Go-Round*, directed by Ench von Stroheim in 1923, and Stroheim was an excellent but uncontrollable director who got fired in the middle of the picture. Julian took it over, salvaged it and turned what would have been a very distinctive film, like all of Stroheim's, into a fairly conventional film. But he got it done and Universal didn't lose their money and the film went on to be a success. So, as far as the studio was concerned, Julian was the golden boy. When the time came to entrust a really big and expensive picture to somebody, I guess they felt they could trust Rupert Julian, that he would come out with something that would be fairly strong, like *Merry-Go-Round*. Of course, *Phantom* didn't play well and [Universal] got Edward Sedgwick to do the ending. But at least they kept fiddling with it until they had something they felt they could release. Universal was not an "auteur's studio."

How did the film affect Chaney's career, particularly in the last five years of his life, before he succumbed to lung cancer?

Well, for the last five years of his life, he worked exclusively for MGM. They did a mix of films where he played grotesques, as well as films in which he played straight dramatic roles such as *Tell It to the Marines* [1926]. But, because *Phantom of the Opera* is in the public domain, which means that it has been much more available than any of the MGM silent films, I think it's the film that Lon Chaney is probably remembered more for today than any other by far. The cork has just begun to come out of the bottle for MGM films in the last few



THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA DAVID L. LUDWIG & UNIVERSAL PICTURES 1989

THE DIRECTOR OF HALLOWEEN IV: THE RETURN OF MICHAEL MYERS brings *Phantom* into the modern age with Robert Englund as the title character. Most interesting for bridging the original novel's Faustian overtones, the Phantom, here named Erik Draven, makes a pact with the Devil for unlimited magical gifts, but loses his face in the bargain. The Krueger-esque character doesn't wear the conventional mask here either, but one made of the skin of his victims. A solid entry, but in a series of films with exceptional music, the '80s attempt at pop-opera doesn't translate well when performed on a Victorian stage.





Carla Laemmle, the last surviving cast member of the original *Phantom of the Opera*, recalls.

Dancing with a Monster

by James Burrell

Since the release of *The Phantom of the Opera* in 1925, generations of audiences have enthralled at the sight of Lon Chaney's horribly deformed composer, Erik.

One of the few people to actually see Chaney don his iconic Phantom makeup (in a bid to keep the Phantom's appearance a secret, he kept his face covered to all but the actors in the same scenes) was one of the film's performers: actress and dancer Carla Laemmle. The niece of Universal Pictures' founder, Carl Laemmle, she is—having just turned 102 years old on October 20—the film's last surviving cast member.

"It was frightening, although you know it's makeup and all," chuckles Laemmle, who was given the rare opportunity to see Chaney's grotesque masterpiece in person. "To be that close to a monster was, well, for a young person like me, it was pretty scary."

Born in Chicago in 1909, Laemmle and her family relocated to California in 1921 and, on the invitation of her uncle, moved into a bungalow located on the Universal studio lot. Residing on the premises for more than fourteen years, Laemmle had an opportunity to see numerous early classics being filmed, including 1923's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, featuring Chaney as the misshapen bell-ringer, Quasimodo. Two years later, she would make her acting debut in *Phantom*. As the lead ballerina in the ballet sequence near the opening of the film, Laemmle did not require much preparation, as she was, in actuality, already a classically trained dancer.

"I studied ballet since the time I was four years old," she explains. "So I was an accomplished ballerina by that time. But it was just a wonderful occasion for me. I was on this wonderful stage, which was an exact replica of the one in Paris. I was performing with my partner, and I was, I think, only sixteen at the time. And they still have that stage there [part of the set is still housed in Stage 38 at Universal Studios, Hollywood], and they call it the Phantom Stage."

Co-starring in the film as the Phantom's object of affection, Christine Daaé, was Laemmle's childhood friend, Mary Philbin. Landing a studio contract after meeting with Carla's father, Philbin would go on to make several major films, including the 1928 classic *The Man Who Laughs* with Conrad Veidt (*Wolf 13*), before retiring from acting a few years later.

"Well, you know—we were friends in Chicago," explains Laemmle. "She was six years older than I. We were close, almost like sisters. But she was a very shy person and it was not easy for her to adapt to motion pictures right away. At that time, they didn't have talking pictures, only silents. But she conquered that and became a very fine actress."

Laemmle, who also makes the distinction of speaking the very first lines ever heard in a sound horror film (for 1931's *Dracula*, his co-authored two books in recent years: a biography called *Amovie: the Rugged Rocks* and the illustrated *Growing Up With Monsters: My Times at Universal Studios in Hollywood*). She is even enjoying a resurgence of sorts in her acting career, including a role in the soon-to-be-released movie *Mansion of Blood*, with Gary Busby.

Laemmle looks back very fondly at her years living at Universal and observing "The Man of a Thousand Faces" at work. Although it was more than eight decades ago, her memory of Chaney is still vivid.

"Anything with Lon Chaney in it would just be a fantastic privilege for me to watch him perform," says Laemmle. "He was a genius, there was no question in my mind. He had to suffer all kinds of experiences, but he was so dedicated to his work that he would do anything to make it better. I was very lucky, you know, to be able to be there at that time in my life and I had the wonderful opportunity of seeing great actors like Lon Chaney.... It was such a tragedy that he had to leave us so early. He could have performed and given us so many other roles."



The Phantom of the Opera



THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA | TONY REAGAN, NEC, 1980

AN EPIC FOUR-HOUR ANNIVERSARY produced after the success of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical, this one stars Burt Lancaster as the Paris Opera manager and Charles Dence as a desiring, romantic Phantom. It takes several liberties with Gaston Leroux's original novel, including the murder of Joseph Duquet, pranks pulled on diva Carlotta and the depiction of the Phantom there, he's a kind, compassionate soul. The back story about his mother shows that, unlike in the novel, she loved him unconditionally, and it remains the only film adaptation to never reveal his face. It's celebratory as one of the most nuanced, tragic, yet still horrific adaptations.

Gabriel Chibaudou looks back on more than twenty years of performing his live score for *The Phantom of the Opera*

Malformed Melodies

by Trevor Tuminski

Q UESIC COMPOSER GABRIEL CHIBAUDEAU REMEMBERS THE FIRST TIME HE SAW THE ORIGINAL PHANTOM OF THE OPERA FONDU. But the viewing didn't exactly elicit the fiery sparks that typically characterize a lengthy love affair.

"I fell asleep!" he exclaims, laughing. "I thought that it was great except that I saw it as a silent on an old TV set, on WBS, and I thought that maybe it was too slow. But there was something interesting about it, especially on the part of Lon Chaney."

Still, it struck a chord with the musician and in 1960, once he had completed his musical studies, writing a live score for *Phantom* seemed like the best way to address his burning need for artistic expression.

"When I was younger, it was difficult to make a living as a musician and I felt a bit of rejection," admits Chibaudou. "Just to see *Phantom* on the big screen and to see it seemed like a way to get rid of that feeling. I really became involved in the story of a guy who was [also] rejected. At that time, I will quite remember."

Now, considered to be one of the world's great silent-film accompanists, Chibaudou has performed his *Phantom* score live for over two decades throughout North America and Europe. His melding of contemporary orchestra, piano and vintage organ (paired with operatic arias sung by Claudine Côte) can also be heard on Image's 1995 DVD and the new Blu-ray edition out this month.

"Generally, when people hear my score they say that what I did was softer, the main character is that people are more inclined to love the Phantom than they did previously with the other scores," he explains. "I really cast myself in the part of the Phantom in the way that I scored it."

The composer, who has also written and performed scores for *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923) and *The Man Who Laughs* (1928), cites *Phantom*'s famous unmasking scene as easily its most frightening sequence, both visually and musically.

"When the Phantom's being unmasked, it's just an organ chord that's very dissonant, but then we see Christine's reaction with a full contemporary blast of the orchestra," he says. "Although there's no singing in that part, the way it's written, you can hear her screaming through the orchestra."

Though Chibaudou won't yet reveal his next horror score, which he's preparing for the 50th anniversary of La Cinéma-thèque Québécoise (the audiovisual preservation museum where he is resident conductor and composer), he says the key to scoring period films is the overall impression implied by the notes rather than the notes themselves.

"Sometimes just the sound of a bell combined with the image can elicit horror in the minds of people. It depends where you put the note and how you play it."



Fit Fatale: A still from the original ending of the film in which *The Phantom* dies of a broken heart.

years since Warner Bros. acquired them and has begun to put out stuff on DVD. Before that, Chaney was really only known by *Phantom*, *Hunchback*, the few

independent films he did like *Shadows*, in which he plays a Chinese man, and some of the other Universal films that were available on the Show-A-Homes such as *The Shock* and *Oliver Twist*—where he plays Fagin. He didn't do the talking version of *Phantom* because MGM wouldn't release him.



How well has the film stood up? Is it comparable to other early silent genre classics such as *Nosferatu* or *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*?

I think those are good examples because *Nosferatu* is a film which is wonderfully directed, has one really strong performance and good art direction. Nobody will look at *Nosferatu* and say it's a masterpiece, though, but it has a lot of good components and like many other horror and fantasy films—of which there were not very many during the silent era—it has stayed alive and *Caligari* has stayed alive in popular culture. *Caligari* is a film that is very interesting for its story structure and art direction, but you wouldn't think of it as noteworthy in any other respect. But those respects are so extraordinary that the film has lived. Now, I wouldn't call any of those films or *Phantom*

on par with something like *Flesh and the Devil* [a 1926 drama starring Garbo], which is brilliantly thought of in visual terms and

brilliantly acted and executed by everybody associated with it. But, you know, these films all have enough components that are distinctive enough for them to still work. I think that's what you can say about *Phantom*. You can't say that Norman Kerry or Mary Philbin are making something magnificent. But Chaney is magnificent. And Ben Carré's sets are magnificent. It's a com-

petently put-together film with a strong story and it has an effect. Like any other silent movie, half the show is music, so with good music that respects the film and a beautiful print so that it looks as good as it looked when it was new, you really have something. When the image is all you have, the image ought to be great. When the music has a great deal to do with the perception of the film, then the music ought to be great. It's an effective melodrama with some wonderful stuff.

Why has the film endured? Is it the story, presentation or Chaney's macabre makeup?

What makes the film work is Lon Chaney and the art direction, which is spectacular. And of course, it's a wonderful story.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (LINO ARANTO, A.P.A. 1930)

THE ITALIAN MASTER of the macabre strays far from the novel's premise in an attempt to bring out its darkest colours, but those colours prove to be muddy and dull. In *The Phantom*, played by a long-haired Julien Saind, was raised by rats in the sewers beneath the Paris Opera House, escapes the risk and isn't disfigured, does not teach Christine (Aida Arantio) to sing, and communicates with her by telepathy. It's notable for being the only film in which the Phantom saves Christine, but its lack of any intrigue or passion makes the England version look like a free successor to Rupert Julian's original film.



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Rue Morgue TUNES INTO AN ERA WHEN HIGH-QUALITY, ORIGINAL HORROR MOVIES WERE A STAPLE OF PRIME-TIME TELEVISION

The Golden Age of TV TERROR

by Kier-La Janisse

WHEN PEOPLE WAX NOSTALGIC ABOUT THE '70s – whether it's the feathered hair, dune buggies, board games or Hanna-Barbera cartoons – one cannot underestimate the power of television in creating those warm memories. Back before we had hundreds of cable channels, there were only three major American networks – CBS, NBC and ABC – that had a monopoly on home viewing, and they utilized this captive audience as a means of testing out some bold new programming, helping to launch the careers of several legendary horror directors along the way. The decade was a golden age (lasting essentially from 1969-1979) that would have a lingering impact on TV.

Things started to change in the mid-'60s. Before then, original TV programming didn't include feature films, but rather mainly old Hollywood titles that wouldn't be seen as a threat to the theatrical market. At the same time, younger audiences were embracing increasingly graphic, violent and sexually explicit theatrical movies that were made to compete directly with television. This created a problem for the networks.

"[A] factor was the time and effort [it took] to edit/censor films for TV," says David Deal, author of *Television Fright Films of the 1970s*. "Trying to put, say, *Bonnie and Clyde* on at 7 p.m. Sunday night on CBS would be a costly effort indeed."

So when NBC introduced the *Project 120* series in 1964 and its follow-up series *World Premiere* in 1966, both platforms for original two-hour films, it was a pioneering move. But it was Barry Diller and Leonard Goldenson over at ABC who really upped the ante with the groundbreaking *Movie of the Week* series, launched in 1969 with an ambitious mandate: 26 entirely original 90-minute movies produced exclusively for the station.

"ABC had a reputation for offering the lowest-common-denominator programming at the time," notes Michael Karol, author of *The ABC Movie of the Week Companion*, "and was looking for any way to distinguish itself from the other networks."

This broadcast of programming momentum coincided with the emerging counterculture, and many of the risks being taken by the major studios with feature films, following the success of *Easy Rider*, were mirrored on the small

screen. The questions being posed by the younger, more demanding audience were addressed candidly in the telenovela, even though the television context required more maneuvering to get past content restrictions.

"The counterculture made itself felt on *The ABC Movie of the Week* as early as November 18, 1969, in the first half of its first season, when the series aired *The Ballad of Andy Crocker*, about the problems facing a returning Vietnam vet, played by Lee Majors," offers Karol. "Although *The ABC Movie of the Week* did not abandon traditional fare, it was willing to tackle themes that regular TV series couldn't or wouldn't."

Karol points out that socially conscious TV movies such as *Go Ask Alice*, *Mr. and Mrs. So Jo Jones*, *Someone / Touched*, *That Certain Summer* and *Tribes* tackled a variety of topical social issues, including teen drug abuse, teen pregnancy, venereal disease, homosexuality and the anti-war movement. Soon, horror got in on the act too.

"A certain open-mindedness of the general public allowed subjects like occultism, Satanism and the like to breach the small screen," says Deal. "The result, happily for us, was a glut in horror and supernatural-based TV movies that enjoyed a golden age in the early to late '70s."

Paul Wendkos, who had made the first real telenovela film with *Fear No Evil* (NBC, 3/3/69), turned in one of the best with paranoid conspiracy thriller *Brotherhood of the Wolf* (CBS, 9/17/70), starring Glenn Ford as a defected member of a powerful secret society who aims to bring down "The Establishment" that the sinister cult represents (all set to a jazz/classical hybrid score by Jerry Goldsmith). Another standout

A CERTAIN OPEN-MINDEDNESS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC ALLOWED SUBJECTS LIKE OCCULTISM, SATANISM AND THE LIKE TO BREACH THE SMALL SCREEN.

David Deal
author of *Television
Fright Films of the 1970s*

of the early years of the TV movie boom was *Crowhaven Farm* (ABC, 11/24/70), ostensibly a story about a woman (Hope Lange) who believes hers, it to be a reincarnated witch, but in actuality a dense psychological examination of repression and guilt in the face of changing gender roles that were allowing women more independence. Luc Phillips' *The Stranger Within* (ABC, 10/1/74), working from a script by Richard Matheson, explored similar gender issues by focusing on the rampant pedophobia that was characteristic of '70s films following the success of *Rosemary's Baby*.

Matheson also scripted *Duel* (ABC, 11/10/71), Steven Spielberg's famous television feature debut, which is simplified peasant terror at its finest, featuring Dennis Weaver as a regular Joe randomly terrorized by an unseen assailant in a semi truck. For a generation that revelled in car culture as a symbol of freedom and unbounded mobility, *Duel* was a shattering castration.

Spielberg wasn't the only heavy-hitting director with early work on the small screen, either. John Carpenter's cat-and-mouse thriller *Someone's Watching Me* (NBC, 11/29/78) starred Lauren Hutton as a woman being stalked by a man in a neighbouring apartment building; Wes Craven's *Summer of Fear* (NBC, 10/31/78) starred Linda Blair as a youngster tormented by a cousin she suspects is manipulating her family through witchcraft; John Badham's *Don't Breathe a Word* (ABC, 10/2/73) was a subtle revenge thriller featuring Alan Aida and Louise Lasser; and Tobe Hooper turned in one of the most revered horror mini-series with *Salem's Lot* (CBS, 11/17 + 24/78), scripted by Paul Masliah (who had produced another Stephen King adaptation, Brian De Palma's *Came, in 1976*). Starring Starsky and Hutch's David Soul as a writer who returns to his boyhood town of Salem's Lot, Maine, in order to write a book about the creepy Marsten House, a local mansion that terrified him as a kid, he soon finds vampires are running amok, headed up by the mysterious Mr. Barlow (Reggie Nalder). Building horror fans fell in love with *Salem's Lot* not only for its terrifying vampiric villain and atmosphere of foggy dread, but also because it featured a teenaged horror fan (played by Lance Kerwin) in a heroic role. The film was also groundbreaking in its depiction of child murder, which was usually verboten on TV.



Exit On The Airwaves: (top to bottom) Mr. Barlow from Tobe Hooper's *Salem's Lot*, Wile Craven's *Summer of Fear*, and Steven Spielberg's *Duel*.

Topping the unofficial list of the best made-for-TV horror films is John Newland's original *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark* (ABC, 10/10/73) – a theatrical remake was recently spearheaded by Guillermo del Toro, as producer/co-writer. In the original, a neurotic housewife named Sally (Kim Darby) and her business exec husband move into her ancestral home, a spooky two-storey Victorian mansion. In typical haunted-house fashion, they come across a locked room that they are determined to open. After rebuffing the admonitions of a sage-like handyman who insists they should leave the room locked and untouched, they open her father's old study and immediately set to work on the inexplicably bricked-up fireplace. Once the fireplace (i.e. portal to hell) is opened, Sally begins to see small creatures everywhere, but no one will believe her, including her best friend, who initially thinks she may be suffering from delusions brought on by marital neglect. But we all know strange things happen at night, and Sally's demonic new friends are keen to initiate her into a world of riteless terror. A big creepy house, scary wipers, dark lighting, a downbeat ending... the classic horror tenets are all used to maximum effect in this essential gem of '70s horror cinema. Director Newland was already a vet of the genre by this point, having helmed and hosted the early '60s supernatural reality show *One Step Beyond*, as well as episodes of *Boris Karloff's Thriller*, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *Rod Serling's Night Gallery* and (TV series) *The Sixth Sense*.

"There's no doubt that the novelty of the special effects was an audience draw," notes Deal, of *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark*, "but it was the quality of the other aspects of the film that produced genuine scares and made it a classic on its first showing."

Countering the insular horror of that film is the epic scale of Jack Smight's *Frankenstein: The True Story* (NBC, 11/30/73). Despite its title, the film is not actually that faithful to the original book – it borrows many elements from previously existing Hammer *Frankenstein* productions – but remains one of the most moving versions of the oft-adapted tale. Scripted by author Christopher Isherwood and his long-time lover Don Bachardy, the film was notable for the sympathetic gay subtext that underscored the relationship between Victor Frankenstein (Leonard Whiting of *Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet*) and his nameless creation (Michael Sarrazin). Spearheaded by Universal TV producer Hunt Stromberg, Jr., it was originally broadcast in two parts and became a ratings hit for NBC. *Frankenstein: The True Story* was also released in a two-hour theatrical version in the UK, which makes sense considering that many of the principal roles were played by British actors, including James Mason, Ralph Richardson, John Gielgud, David McCallum and Tom Baker.

An equally effective period tale is Paul Wendkos' *The Legend of Lizzie Borden* (ABC, 2/10/75), one of the most dramatic and well-executed of the '70s telefilms. With interludes dramatizing separate arguments of Lizzie Borden's trial, the film recreates the still-unresolved crime that has fascinated the public for over a century. Elisabeth Montgomery

(Samantha Stevens of TV's *Bewitched*) was nominated for an Emmy for her role as the title character, who was rumoured to have butchered her parents with an axe (Montgomery was also, strangely enough, a distant relative of the real-life Borden). More than just a courtroom drama, the film also has an unsettling tangle-like quality that's the stuff of nightmares.

"*The Legend of Lizzie Borden* was a hit then and remains one of the touchstones of the era, and rightly so," asserts Deal. "Obviously the period of the story removes it from the sometimes distracting quaintness of the 1970s, but the production has an ethereal, dreamlike quality that strikes a chord in viewers and assures its classic status as one of the great television films of that or any decade."

Director Wendkos would later revisit this terrain with the Emmy-nominated TV movie version of *The Bad Seed* (ABC, 2/7/85), based on the 1954 William March novel about a homicidal child de-

Screaming on the Laugh Track

by Dan Murphy

EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE THE BIG NETWORKS' SAFE, saccharine sitcoms and action-packed programming veer to the dark side for an episode or two. Sometimes the scariest aspect is the ensuing flesh-crawling cheesiness or deader-than-a-door-mat attempts at humour, but even the holiest of family programming can take a twisted and disturbing turn. Track down the DVD box sets or search for 'em on YouTube... if you dare.



THE ANDY GRIFFITH SHOW "The Haunted House" (1963)

Sheriff Andy, his deputy Barney and neighbour Gomer venture into an abandoned house to retrieve a baseball, which Andy's son Opie knocked through a window. The house features all of the standard haunted house set pieces – shadowy, cobwebbed corridors, paintings with eyes that seem to move, weird noises – and plenty of bug-eyed reactions from Don Knotts as Andy's clumsy right-hand man. "There are some things beyond the ken of mortal man that we shouldn't tamper with," Barney sagely warns. Very true, though in this case, the ghoul is just the local moonshiner trying to scare outsiders away from his private still.



THE BRADY BUNCH "Fright Night" (1972)

Even the squeaky-clean Brady clan has dabbled in spirit-summoning. In this episode, Jan and Cindy are awakened by a creaking sound in the attic and see a ghostly apparition outside of their bedroom window. Mr. Brady discovers that the Brady boys have rigged an old rocking chair to creak and used a slide projector to create the "ghost." He nags on them to the girls, who then cook up their own ghoulish scheme, telling the boys that they can't spend one night in the "haunted attic." They spring their own homemade ghost on their siblings, and even housekeeper Alice gets spooked, mistaking a bust of Mr. Brady for a burglar.



LAVERNE & SHIRLEY "Haunted House" (1977)

When Shirley's boyfriend advises the girls that they can pick up a cheap sofa at an estate sale at the old Ramble house – a creepy Milwaukee Gothic decorated with human skulls, ominous suits of armour and an organ that plays itself – Laverne and

Creature Box:
Michael Sarrazin in
Frankenstein: The True Story.



scended from a female serial killer who was based loosely on American murderess Belle Gunness.

In the realm of psychological horror, Buzz Kalki's *Bad Ronald* (ABC, 10/23/74) stands as one of the most disturbing of ABC's genre outings. Scott Jacoby (*Riviera*, *The Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane*) stars as the title character, a socially awkward teen who is constantly tormented by the in-crowd. When he accidentally kills one of the popular girls (well, it was kind of an accident), his mother (Kim Hunter) devises a plan to hide him in the walls of the house and tell the police he has run away. But when his mother goes to the hospital for surgery and doesn't make it home, the house is presumed vacant

and sold to another family. Little do they know that Bad Ronald is lurking in the walls, spying on them through tiny peepholes and concocting a delusional plan to snitch one of their teenage daughters.

"The atmosphere, especially the tension created throughout, is key to its success," offers Karol. "Between Scott Jacoby, Kim Hunter, and the ultra-creepy house they live in, the viewer is carried along, despite how outrageous the situation might seem if you really sat down and thought about it. Essentially, it's a haunted house film with an all-but-real 'ghost.'"

Deal concurs: "Bad Ronald deals with our dark side as an audience, that of the omniscient voyeur. So I would not say the film was em-

TUNE IN TO TEN OF THE LEAST LIKELY PRIME-TIME TV SHOWS TO DABBLE IN THE DARK SIDE

Shirley recruit affable goatees Lenny and Squiggy to help, and the foursome manage to get locked inside the place. The eccentric homeowner, in a desperate attempt to hang onto her house, holds them hostage until Shirley manages to get the digs preserved as a historical landmark, earning their freedom.



THE DUKES OF HAZZARD

"The Hazzardville Horror" (1980)

Those ol' Duke boys were always suckers for damsel-in-distress. This time, Bo and Luke Duke assist a sexy country girl looking to avenge her family's estate, which is thought to be haunted. The Dukes play ghostbusters and investigate the poltergeist activity of Pongle House, including moving chairs, falling chandeliers and bleeding paintings. It turns out, though, that a pair of crooks were staging the paranormal activities and using the haunted house as a hideout. Hazzard County's finest tell them, *Scoby Doo-style*, just in time for a musical performance by Ms. Tammy Wynette.



MAGNUM, P.I.

"The Woman on the Beach" (1981)

This episode of *Magnum, P.I.* left the door open as to whether or not the characters had a true brush with the supernatural. Thomas Magnum's sidekick, Rick, meets a beautiful woman. They bond over sad stories about lost love, then go for a romantic walk on the beach, where the mysterious lady suddenly vanishes. Hawaii's most mustache-twisted detective takes the case and discovers that Rick's girlfriend had committed suicide 30 years earlier. It's the classic lonely ghost story on a show better known for bikini babes than spooky spectres.



THE FACTS OF LIFE

"The Halloween Show" (1983)

Edna Garrett was known to be a good cook, but could Mr. Drummond's former housekeeper be spicing up her bratwurst with a little man-meat? When an eccentric old man goes missing after visiting Edna's Edibles, Blair, Jo, Toofie and Natalie fear that Mrs. Garrett ground him up and used him as the main ingredient in her famous bratwurst. The girls suspect Edna has been possessed by the spirit of a murderess who once lived in the home. Only Jo is willing to try Mrs. G's new recipe — and she likes it!

KNIGHT RIDER

"Halloween Knight" (1984)

Michael Knight (David Hasselhoff) and his self-sworn Pontiac Trans Am named KITT pay tribute to Alfred Hitchcock with this special Halloween episode that borrows elements from *Rear Window* and *Psycho*. KITT's mechanic, Bonnie, wit-



nesses an apparent murder when she sees a person in a gorilla costume strangle a woman at a neighbor's Halloween party. She and Michael investigate and are led to a quirky fellow named Norman Barnes, who brings them to the set of the Bates Motel. Luckily, KITT is there with his grappling hook to save them from certain doom.



PUNKY BREWSTER

"The Perils of Punky" (1985)

The creepiest of the bunch, this two-part episode finds Punky and pals getting lost while camping and taking refuge in a cave haunted by Indian ghosts. The tribe's chief recruits her to battle an evil spirit and save a princess held captive by the entity. The kids vanish one by one, until only Punky remains. She discovers one friend's mutilated face entombed in a cave wall and the skeleton of another dancing a ghoulish jig. Even her dog gets skeletonized — that's right, they butchered a little girl's dog on Punky Brewster! Eventually, she defeats the demon with the power of love, and her friends (and dog) make a full recovery, which is more than can probably be said for the traumatized children who watched it.



FAMILY MATTERS

"Stevil" (1996) and "Stevil II: This Time He's Not Alone" (1997)

What's more disturbing than nerd poster-boy Steve Urkel? How about an Urkel ventriloquist dummy that comes to life and invades the Winslow family house by creeping up out of the toilet Goulash-style? In perhaps the nadir of 1990s situational comedy, *Family Matters* introduced a doll version of Urkel named Stevil in 1996, played by a little person (a puppet in close-ups). The following year, Stevil returned with a miniature version of the family's dad, Carl (Carleboy). The dummies were out to steal the souls of Urkel and Carl, and... breakdance.



MALCOLM IN THE MIDDLE

"Halloween" (2005)

There are two ways of looking at a house where a murder was committed — either it's a cursed place to be shunned or it's a real estate bargain. In this Halloween episode, Hal learns that a murder was committed in the family home before they moved in. His wife, Lois, knew the house's history, but never told Hal because she didn't want to frighten him. Hal gets hysterical and sees ghosts coming out of the woodwork, leaving son Malcolm to talk Dad down from his phantasmagorical freak-out.

THE ATMOSPHERE, ESPECIALLY THE TENSION CREATED THROUGHOUT, IS KEY TO ITS SUCCESS

Michael Karol

author of *The ABC Movie
of the Week Companion*,
on *Bad Ronald*



braced by the masses at the time but was recognized as a sensitive, if somewhat lurid entry in the genre."

And of course we can't forget Dan Curtis, the ultimate tele-terror provocateur whose résumé alone is enough to establish television as a platform that could rival anything on the big screen. Curtis gave us (either as director or producer) a plethora of the most well-loved and influential TV genre pictures, from the personal investigator-themed *The Night Stalker* (ABC, 1/1/72 – which still holds the record for highest television ratings to date) to the Matheson-scripted *Trilogy of Terror* (ABC, 3/4/75), which inducted the Zuni Fetish Doll into the pantheon of iconic movie monsters. This final story in *Trilogy of Terror*, starring Karen Black in a trio of roles, was influential enough to warrant a revival by Curtis in his 1996 theatrical release *Trilogy of Terror II*. The sequel also mined Curtis' earlier *Dead of Night* (3/29/77) TV film for content by remaking "Bobby," the terrifying closing story of the (admittedly uneven) trilogy. In it, Jean Hackett plays the distraught mother of a child (Lee Montgomery of Curtis' theatrical thriller *Blame It on the Devil*) who recently drowned. In this rift on "The Monkey's Paw," Hackett turns to the black arts to raise her son from the dead, with inevitable results.

One of Curtis' earliest and most memorable contributions to the TV terror canon is *The Norissa Tapes* (ABC, 2/21/73), in which investigative journalist David Norissa (TV movie regular Roy Thinnes) goes missing while researching a book on supernatural phenomena. His publisher discovers a stack of tapes through which the film's tale – involving a zombified bloodsucker, his distressed widow (Angie Dickinson), various psychics and wackos and the immortal Egyptian god Sargh – is recounted. Although suitably frightening, the pilot was never spun into a series as planned.

From classic literature adaptations – including *The Turn of the Screw* (ABC, 4/15/64) and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (ABC, 4/23/64) – to *Old Dark House* rebots to satirical horror comedy, Curtis had a handle on it all. Other classic Curtis productions include *Screen of the Wolf* (ABC, 1/16/74), *The Invasion of Carol Anders* (ABC, 3/6/74) and *Curse of the Black Widow* (ABC, 9/18/77), as well as his own takes on horror staples *Frankenstein* (ABC, 1/16/77) and *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (CBS, 2/6/74). Of course, he was also the man behind beloved vampire daytime soap *Dark Shadows*, currently being remade as a feature film by Tim Burton, with Johnny Depp in the lead as Barnabas Collins.

The Night Stalker's popularity was significant enough to result in its own series, *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*, which ran through 1974–1975 and was very influential in the creation of *The X-Files*. But using telefilm as a means of testing series potential was all part of the strategy. Along with *The Night Stalker*, there was *Kung-Fu*, *The Six Million Dollar Man* and *Wonder Woman*, just to name a few.

Deal notes, "I can point to some of the attempts to sell a series for a psychic investigator using movie slots twice for Louis Jourdan (*Fear No Evil* and *Ritual of Evil*) (NBC, 3/3/69 and 2/3/70, respectively), one for Robert Culp (*Specimen*, NBC, 5/21/77), and one for Alex Diner (*Sweet Sweet Rachel*, NBC, 10/2/77), the latter of which eventually morphed into the famed *Sleazy Sense* with Gary Collins."

Here to Watch: (top to bottom) Scott Jacoby in *Bad Ronald*, Jonathan Frid as Barnabas Collins and Kathryn Leigh Scott as Maggie Evans in *House of Dark Shadows*, and the creatures of *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark*.

While the made-for-TV phenomenon didn't come to a halt at the end of the decade – and indeed some of the '80s entries stood up solidly against their earlier counterparts, including *Dark Night of the Scarecrow* (CBS, 10/24/81), *Adam* (NBC, 10/10/83), *The Burning Bed* (NBC, 10/8/84), *The Bad Seed* (ABC, 2/7/85) and *Deadly Intentions* (ABC, 5/1/85) – the golden age of the TV horror film was undoubtedly the 1970s.

"A chronological look at the telefrights of the '70s reveals a drop in quality and quantity as time goes on," asserts Deal, "due no doubt to the usual factors of the novelty wearing off, the shrinkage of budgets with diminishing returns and a cultural shift away

from the devil-may-care attitude of the business. Hollywood was reverting to the bottom line, tried-and-true mantras that is the natural supplant of creativity."

Of course, all of this is only the tip of the iceberg: the quality genre films made for television are too numerous to mention, even if limited to only the heyday of the 1970s. Television was then, as it is again now, a hotbed for thematically challenging auteur work. While most TV horror films remain unavailable on home video, they do trickle out on DVD and Blu-ray in sporadic increments. But for collectors who miss the old days when it took years of devotion to track down a desired title, it's invigorating to know that there is an untapped world of possibilities still out there, awaiting the eager eyes of the adventurous genre fan. ☺



DESTRUCTIVE FICTION FROM PERMUTED PRESS

EX-PATRIOTS

THE TWO FUGITIVE TERROR ZOMBIES
AND A TERRORIST
- Michael Caines, Peter Clines & David Pines

EX-PATRIOTS

PETER CLINES

PETER CLINES

AMONG THE LIVING

"I HIGHLY RECOMMEND IT"
- Publishers Weekly

AMONG THE LIVING

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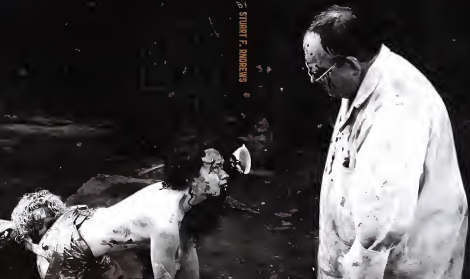
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WE LINK UP WITH THE DIRECTOR AND STAR OF
THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE 2
TO DISCUSS RAISING THE STAKES ON THE DISTURBING
POP CULTURE PHENOMENON

DIRT DOZEN

by STUART F. ANDREWS





“I’VE ALWAYS
HAD A KIND OF
DARK
SENSIBILITY AND
ALWAYS BEEN
INTERESTED IN
THINGS LIKE
VICTORIAN FREAK
SHOWS.”
— LAURENCE
HARVEY

NEVER HAS THE PHRASE “TONGUE-IN-CHEEK” been as literal as it is in *The Human Centipede 2 (Full Sequence)*. Yes, Tom Six’s highly anticipated/faired follow-up to his notorious ode to body horror, *The Human Centipede (First Sequence)* (RME99), is yet another work of mad, perverse brilliance. One can’t claim to enjoy *Full Sequence*, though—an edited version of which began a limited theatrical run in the US on October 7 and is now available on-demand via IFC Midnight—as watching it is kind of like witnessing a natural disaster.

Upon its release in 2009, *The Human Centipede* transcended its appeal to horror fans by penetrating the larger cultural zeitgeist. Many folks claimed it was the sickest film ever made. Roger Ebert famously gave it “no stars” because it “occupies a world where the stars don’t shine.” In truth, such reactions come off as little more than namby-pamby sentiments by those not properly versed in the more atrocious manifestations of the genre. But in the case of the second film, such claims not only fully apply, they may considerably underestimate the shock and horrors on display.

The self-referential *Full Sequence* stars the unforgettable Laurence R. Harvey as Martin, a socially deranged, mentally challenged man who’s dangerously obsessed with *First Sequence*. He works as an underground parking garage attendant and when the opportunity strikes, he attacks his customers with a tire iron, knocking them unconscious before dragging them off to a rented warehouse, where he’s collecting enough bodies to put together his own human centipede. But instead of three people, he wants to do it with twelve! And unlike the infamous Dr. Heiter (Dieter Lusser) from the first film, Martin has absolutely no radical training beyond what he can glean from the movie. What proceeds is beyond words. Part one may have been a horror film that relied upon suggestion more than anything overly explicit, but Six was determined to show everything this time around. And show he does.

“I wanted to use the original as a psychological film because I wanted the audience to get used to the sick idea first,” explains Six. “Then in the back of my mind I always had the idea of a copycat copying the first film. When I travelled the whole world at film festivals, a lot of people asked the question: ‘What if a maniac out there copies your idea and does it for real?’ Then I knew for sure this was exactly the coolest idea for part two!”

It’s a conceit that takes the public reaction to part one on board, with Six practically accusing us for our morbid desires, and with Martin serving as the vehicle for our prurient, voyeuristic impulses. Whatever part of the disturbed, collective unconscious

it is that drives our curiosity with such films, *Full Sequence* lives and breathes in that space with no comprehension of the outside world whatsoever.

“Audiences everywhere were really wanting to see more. They wanted the gore, more than they had seen in part one,” explains Six. “Of course, there were also people that thought part one was horrific, and I got a lot of death threats for it. They thought I was insane. So I wanted to make a film that was so over-the-top and really an answer to what the public was saying. Nowadays, people want more thrills. When you take a roller coaster ride, people want to have more loops and more extreme angles, and [it’s] the same with horror films. The public is not satisfied if it’s too tame, and I really wanted to make a film about that. Also, in society, the media sometimes claims that murderers use films as inspiration. Well, I think those people are already mentally disturbed and they don’t actually copy films. They will do it anyway.”

In the build-up to the sequel, Six released an inspired, Hitchcock-style teaser that sees him walking through an underground parking lot claiming to have scoured the Earth for the sickest bastard of all time. The trailer ends with Martin coming into frame with a bag on his head and tapping a tire iron. It’s an amusing teaser but one

wonders how the character could ever possibly live up to the hype. But after he’s finally unveiled, it quickly becomes apparent that the promo didn’t do justice to the horror that is Martin. He’s one of the most unsettling movie villains ever—a bag-eyed, queasy, greasy bloke with a comb-over and a disfigured belly. And although he doesn’t utter a word of dialogue, the mere sight of him on screen is enough to inspire immediate hot showers.

“[Dieter Lusser] is an amazing actor and he became this cult horror icon so I wanted a completely different person for the sequel,” says Six. “Dieter is tall and thin and Laurence Harvey is totally on the other end of the spectrum. I did auditions in London and I was very disappointed up until the moment when Laurence entered the room. I immediately thought, ‘This is the guy! This is the guy I want.’ And just like Dieter, he had never played in a horror film before.”

Speaking with Harvey on the phone, there’s relief in realizing that he can actually talk and isn’t a legittimely mentally deranged individual that Six was simply exploiting for the purposes of his movie.

“Well, there is something of a showman about Tom,” says Harvey, with a laugh. “I’m sure in the 19th century he would’ve been running a freak show somewhere.” Surprisingly, Martin’s background includes work as a children’s actor, although it’s hard to imagine exactly what sort of children he’d appeal to.

“Damaged ones, I think,” he jokingly offers. “I come from a performance art background. The artist I worked for started doing these really odd characters for children’s



Saturday morning shows. They'd have a character called Gaston who's a French frog in a wheelchair with stumps where his legs have been eaten off and a very drunk, 60-year-old children's entertainer telling kids not to drink and drive. These are the kinds of characters the guys that got me into TV were coming up with."

But Harvey really exposes himself in the film. While he's never fully naked, he spends much of the running time prancing about on-screen with his partly billy protruding over a pair of baggy, stained briefs.

"If you've got it, flaunt it," he says, laughing. "I'm not an exhibitionist at all but I think performance art is some kind of masochism where you subject yourself to things in order for the idea to come across. But also, the rest of the guys who made up the segments of the centipede, they were crawling around on all fours and I knew they were gonna be very exposed. I thought it was only fair that I got exposed too."

Augmenting the movie's sense of unmitigated hopelessness was the decision to shoot the sequel in black and white, which goes a long way to create a world with no sun, and no light at the end of the tunnel. The effect makes the first film feel like a Disney movie in comparison.

"Part one has those very clinical colours and it's all [shot] with steadicam," explains Six. "For the second one, I wanted a completely different look. I wanted a very dark film, I wanted it to look dirty. It's all handheld [camera work] and the black and white [aesthetic] gives it a really uncomfortable feeling for the whole film. I did a *Schindler's List*-like [director Steven Spielberg] using the little red dress, I used the brown dresses combined with the black and white, and I think it helps the story a lot."

But beyond the visceral horrors so abundantly on display, it's within the human relationships where the film is perhaps most depressing. It's a microcosm of society rendered in the bleakest, most nihilistic way possible. At the desecrated heart of the proceedings is the dysfunctional and perversely hypocritical relationship between Martin and his hypochondriac mother.

"Martin's father is in prison for abusing Martin as a child," explains Harvey. "But you always get the impression that Martin's mom hates Martin because she sees him as being responsible for her husband being in jail. With a family like that, you can't blame Martin for going off the rails a bit. I don't see him as being mentally disabled or anything. I see him as being socially and emotionally crippled by his parents and his upbringing. They haven't raised him with any love, or with the skills to socialize with the

outside world or to engage with other people properly. ... I hope the audience does feel some kind of sympathy for him."

As Martin's fantasy of assembling his human centipede draws closer to reality, Harvey so convincingly captures the thrill and delight of this disturbed creature that one wonders if during the course of playing the character he discovered something deeply perverse within his own psyche that he didn't know was there.

"No, I knew it was there," affirms Harvey. "I've always had a kind of dark sensibility and always been interested in things like Victorian freak shows, modern primitives and some of the edgier kind of performance body art stuff. So to me, it's just everyday life, you know."

Despite being shot and set in London, England, *Full Sequence* was initially banned outright in the UK by the British Board of Film Classification, a scenario that gifted the film with instant infamy.

I PROBABLY WILL GET EVEN MORE

DEATH
THREATS.

-Tom Six

"I got two strong emotions immediately," admits Six. "One was that I jumped for joy. Because I'm up there now with only eleven films that are banned in [the BBC's] 93-year history. I'm up with *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and a film from [Stanley] Kubrick, so that's a huge honour, eh? And the banning actually helped enormously for the marketing. In America, they even used the quote 'may cause harm to viewers' in the trailer. On the other hand, I'm very upset because who are they to decide for adults whether they can see a film or not? It's ridiculous. It's an organization from the dinosaur era. Everybody can now watch films on the Internet and bring them in from other countries, so it's useless what they're doing. Our distributor's doing everything I can to un-ban it, and they're even going to court for that, I believe."

(Since this interview, it was passed with an 18 rating, following 32 cuts to excise two minutes and 37 seconds.)

At press time, *Full Sequence* had only one public screening, its world premiere at Fantastic Fest in Austin, Texas, where audience reactions were decidedly mixed.

"People either hate it or they absolutely love it," notes the filmmaker. "There's hardly a middle ground and I like it like that. I think it would be terrible if people were indifferent and didn't care. I probably will get even more death threats, I have no clue what's going to happen."

Says Harvey: "The people that didn't like the film thought it was brilliantly directed and brilliantly acted, but I think what they didn't like was the excessive violence. I think a lot of the horror audience is split into two. Some prefer the more psychological idea dominating the thing like in the first one, and some prefer the splatter of the second one."

Despite releasing the film unrated, IFC has edited *Full Sequence* for its theatrical run with the intention of making an uncensored version available for the eventual Blu-ray/DVD release. Regardless of how denuded the version in theatres may be, however, *Full Sequence* still serves as a welcome reminder – thanks to Six's pathological tastelessness and wickedly sick sense of humour – that there are new taboos that have not been transgressed and new levels of horror yet to pour from disturbed imaginations onto screens.

Almost as if punctuating the point, Six has already promised a third and final instalment in the franchise, which he says will pick up right where the second film leaves off.

"In the end, all three films will be connected like a centipede," says the director. "For the final sequence, I really want to go out with a happy end, and then I'm really fed up with centipede films. I can tell you it's gonna be a 180-degree turn again so it will be a completely different film than one and two. But I have some really horrible things up my sleeve, I think." ☹



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Empire of Death
INVITES READERS TO VISIT THE BONE CHURCHES
OF THE WORLD AND LEARN THEIR SECRETS

Architecture OF THE Dead

by CLAUDE HORNEILL



AUTHOR AND PHOTOGRAPHER PAUL KOUDOUNARIS HAS FACED STRANGER THINGS THAN DEATH IN HIS QUEST TO DOCUMENT THE WORLD'S BONE CHAPELS AND OSSUARIES. During the research for his new book, *Empire of Death*, he was accosted by nuns, arrested by Austrian police, forced to hitchhike with Sinfonia-singing priests and had to fake a broken arm in the Paris Catacombs in order to get around a ban on the use of camera tripods—all of which is documented on his website, empireofdeath.com. But the most surreal experience he had was on the Greek Orthodox site of Mount Athos.

"I had written to one of the monasteries there and explained my project," he says. "Simonepetra Monastery invited me, and since I had in fact been baptized in a Greek Orthodox church I was granted a pilgrim's permit. Well, you have to pick up the actual permit from

an office in Greece, near where the boat to Athos departs, and when I got to this office I was told my permit had been granted but I could not possibly be taken to Athos looking the way I do." The authorities feared Koudoumaris' dreadlocks, piercings and tattoos would prove too much for the conservative monks. "I asked at the office what I could do, and they suggested I go to the pharmacy and buy some gauze and use it to cover up everything about me that might be considered strange or different," he recalls.

Koudoumaris dutifully wrapped himself up and set off for the holy mountain. "I was wandering around Mount Athos like that for several days," he says. "There is no transportation, you have to walk sometimes five or more miles between places, and it was the middle of summer, and I was wrapped up like a mummy. The gauze was getting dirtier every day, so dirty that one monastery made me sleep in a chicken coop. The ones who finally took pity on me were the Russian monks. When I got to their monastery, the abbot decided this was insane. He said something

about, "God sees and accepts you for who you are, and we will also. So please take off all these ridiculous bandages."

Empire of Death (out now from Thames & Hudson) is the result of a four-and-a-half-year odyssey for Koudounaris that he began after completing a PhD in art history at UCLA. During a trip to the Czech Republic, he discovered an intriguing bone chapel in the town of Meink – and was even more fascinated when he found out that few people, including the locals, knew of its existence. He set out to discover how many more of these forgotten places existed, eventually travelling across four continents to research and photograph them.

"The funny thing is, at the outset I wanted to just do a regional book, kind of like a tour guide," he says. "I had vowed that I would not get sucked into a gigantic project that would attempt to cover all of [the chapels] and take many years."

Despite that vow, he ended up producing an amazing, 200-plus page full-colour history of an architectural movement, accompanied by breathtaking photos on almost every spread. His main focus is the cultural history of the chapels he has photographed, but for those wishing to follow in his footsteps, the book also contains maps and visitation details in an appendix. (For more of Koudounaris' adventures with human skulls, see the *Travelogue* on p.58.)

For many, the sites featured in the book may seem morbid, gruesome and even disrespectful towards the dead whose bones form the monuments. But as Koudounaris points out, this aversion demonstrates a significant change in attitude towards our bodies and death since the shrines first began being built, around 530 AD. Before the Enlightenment, the dead were viewed very differently than they are today.

"Death affirmed life, the decay it brought affirmed beauty, and the holistic system in which they were linked was a system of salvation," he explains. "[The Enlightenment] had the effect of ghettoizing the dead. Being dead has become taboo. Society no longer wanted the dead around, and this includes the [Catholic] Church, who were more responsible for the dead being around than anyone."

The Catholic bone chapels and ossuaries evolved over the centuries from what were effectively storage rooms relieving the pressures of overflowing cemeteries into what Koudounaris calls "symbolic structures for displaying concrete examples

of the transience of human life" – buildings designed to remind viewers of their own mortality.

"In many ways [the Catholic Church] now seems embarrassed by the great monuments to literal, physical death that they once created," elaborates Koudounaris. "In many cases, they are hidden away, either because people in the Church are ashamed of them, or afraid they will be mocked as monuments of bad taste and superstition."

Which, of course, they are anything but. What is striking about Koudounaris' photographs of the ossuaries is not only the elegance and artistry with which the bones are arranged, but the levelling effects of death. In death, after all, no worldly distinctions remain, and the chapels make this as palpable to the secular humanist as they would to the most devout. Studying the photographs can be a profoundly spiritual experience: photographer Joel-Peter Witkin, whose own work is strongly concerned with themes of death and dismemberment, has stated plainly, "The subject of [Koudounaris'] book is life," noting "this material can change people's lives."

Koudounaris agrees: "I think we are talking about groups of people...who are not interested in things which are morbid solely for the sake of being dark, but rather choose to seek beauty in things which are repressed or socially abject. In things which are cast out or produce fear, there can often be found beauty which is profound since it exists on a primal level."

But the beauty in the bone chapels is neither purely spiritual or subjective. Koudounaris is also keen to emphasize what he terms the "architectural literacy" of the chapels.

"When I say a place is architecturally literate, I am saying it is designed by people who are skilled in the language of architecture and understand its syntax – for example, in terms of how details are used to create what, to a contemporary observer, would indicate a level of sophistication and erudition." He cites the two *Capelas dos Ossos* in Campo Maior (AMF110) and Faro, Portugal, as excellent examples. "If you subtracted the bones and just looked at the way details are arranged, you would find that they are skilful and methodical structures. ... Tremendous care went into their creation. They were obviously extremely meaningful places for the people who constructed them, and that is borne out by the way some of these structures were built with such meticulous consideration and respect." 🙏

All That Remains: Retributed bare work of a 13th-century chapel in Eggenburg, Austria, and (inset) a mummified infant in the crypt of a monastery in Palermo, Sicily.



AFTER FOUR DECADES DR. PHIBES RETURNS IN A NEW NOVEL BY HIS CREATOR, WILLIAM GOLDSTEIN

ABOMINABLE

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

by JAMES BURRELL

VINCENT PRICE WOULD PORTRAY NUMEROUS SINISTER VILLAINS DURING HIS FIVE DECADES IN FILM, but none of them resonated with horror fans quite like diabolical genius Anton Phibes from 1971's *The Abominable Dr. Phibes* and its sequel, 1972's *Dr. Phibes Rises Again*!

A renowned concert organist horribly disfigured in an automobile crash, Phibes—with the help of his beautiful, seemingly mute assistant Vulava—stays the medical team he deems responsible for the death of his cherished wife, Victoria. As the holder of a doctorate in theology, Phibes also puts his knowledge of the Old Testament to good use by murdering his victims in manners inspired by the ten plagues of Egypt. The follow-up film sees the character do away with an archaeological group whose leader has interfered with Phibes' plans to revive his spouse.

Acclaimed for their stylish Art Deco design, droll performances and darkly comic screenplays, the films and their cultured villain went on to spawn paperback novels, Halloween masks, model kits, a collectible figure and comic books. Now, the character has been resurrected once again in the new novel *Dr. Phibes—in the Beginning*. Part origin story, part modern-day sequel, the book explores Phibes' relationship with Victoria and details his transformation from an esteemed diplomat into a revenge-seeking madman. Bolstering the new narrative is the fact that the book is written by the character's original creator: author and screenwriter William Goldstein.

"The questions and interest [in the character] just kept mounting, as well as the speculation about a sequel," says Goldstein, who also penned the films' original 1970s tie-in novelizations. "After I acquired the copyrights to the books, I was free to run with it. Also, the story was there. When I was finished with the earlier projects, there was a great sense of completion, but also one of something more that needed to be done."

Helping to drive the project, says Goldstein, who is self-publishing the novel, was the opportunity to present a more fully formed back story for Phibes—who he is loath to refer to as a serial killer—and in doing so, provide an opportunity for readers to understand why the character resorts to the actions he does.

"How does this accomplished Englishman and respected diplomat come about killing this team of doctors?" asks Goldstein.

"Where it came from was that he loved his new bride. He could not find closure, and his *raison d'être* is that he will find a way to bring her back. Phibes is a very smart man [who] uses the existing science of his era to propel his work."

As with the films, the Phibes of the novel doesn't show much mercy for those who stand in his way and he devises yet another set of elaborate murders to exact revenge against his adversaries. Like the G'lach—the ancient curse of the pharaohs, consisting of boils, bats, frogs, blood, hail, rats, beasts, locusts, the death of the first born and darkness—employed in the first movie, Phibes once again mines the Bible for creative ways to dispatch his victims.

"In the new book, there's a new 'death geometry' as grandiose and biblical as the first film," explains Goldstein. "In the last third of the book, he meets a new challenger, a worthy opponent and there's an operatic settling of accounts."

Currently available through Amazon Kindle, *Dr. Phibes—in the Beginning* is expected to be released in paperback soon and Goldstein is also exploring the possibility of packaging it with the previous Phibes novels, which are now considered valuable collector's items. Additionally, a spin-off graphic novel is in the works that will focus on Phibes' mechanical "Clockwork Wizards" orchestra.

With *The Abominable Dr. Phibes* currently celebrating its 40th anniversary, Goldstein fondly remembers when his script for the film was chosen by American International Pictures for production and remarks that "it was love at first sight" when he saw the finished film.

"I was working with James Whitton, and we established contact with an intermediary who got the script to [American International Pictures founders] Sam Arkoff and Jim Nicholson," he explains. "And in one of those eureka moments that seldom happens in Hollywood, they sparked to it. Especially Jim Nicholson, who was a great, qualitative horror fan. And Vincent was one of a kind. He had just the right mix of camp and horror and he did both of them elegantly."



MEMENTO MORGUE



Guillermo del Toro introduces the CineMorgue screening of *Mimic: The Director's Cut* at the Toronto Underground Cinema.



(Left to right) Justin Enksson, Trevor Turnish, *Level* directors Alexandru Buzdito and Julian Maury, Gary Pullin and Ron McKenzie at RM's HQ, during the Toronto International Film Festival.



Brave CineMorgue attendees eat bugs for prizes.



Lisa Ladouceur and Gary Pullin launch *Encyclopedia Gothica* at the Gladstone Hotel in Toronto.



Monica S. Kuttler with Willow Kilgore 3 guests of honour Jonathan Maberry (left) and Edward Lee



William F. Nolan (left) and Jack Ketchum party at Killerson 3

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KILLING IN THE NAME OF

RED STATE

Starring John Goodman, Michael Parks and Kyle Gallner
Written and directed by Kevin Smith
Phase 4

"A parlour trick" is how Kevin Smith has described his first foray into the horror genre. Apt description, 'cause *Red State* only begins as a fright flick before morphing into an action siege movie. (Similarly, you may have noted that the original creepy crucifixion poster art was later changed to a babe with an AK-47.) It's dark as hell all around, though. In fact, the filmmaker, who's known for his comedies, went the indie route with the \$4 million film after potential producers the Weinstein Brothers rejected it for being too bleak.

Politics likely played a role too, as you can guess by the title. *Red State* is heavy on the social commentary. At the heart of the story is an ultra-right-wing church modelled after the Westboro Baptist Church (yes, those gay-bashing, funeral-protesting stunts on the underpents of humanity), members of which lure three high school boys, including one played by Kyle Gallner (*A Nightmare on Elm Street*

remake), into a trap with the promise of an orgy (ah, high school...). The boys are drugged and brought to the church compound, where the cult's leader plans to make them his latest gruesome example of what happens to heathens. Michael Parks (*Twin Peaks*, *From Dusk Till Dawn*, *Grindhouse*) plays the devoutly crazed preacher with a fire 'n' brimstone fervour worthy of a Best Supporting Actor nod, even if Smith tends to let some of his scenes run too long.

Before the kids can be executed, a deputy gets too close and is killed by the sect, sparking a full-on siege. An anti-terrorism squad is called in, led by a no-bullshit veteran played by John Goodman, paving the way for a (very well-directed) bloodbath of a shootout.

With plenty of wry commentary on both religion and government, well-crafted dialogue and loads of twists, *Red State* is the most weighty, satisfying and technically accomplished film in Smith's canon thus far. It'd be great to see what he could do with a horror film proper. Too bad then that he's apparently retiring from directing after his next film, because holy gaping head wounds, *Red State* proves that he can spew blood and evil with the best of 'em.

DAVE ALEXANDER



CATCH IT IF YOU CAN

CONTAGION

Starring Matt Damon, Kate Winslet and Jude Law
Directed by Steven Soderbergh
Written by Scott Z. Burns
Warner Bros.

Ever wonder how many people fingered through the magazine you're holding before you did? Watching Steven Soderbergh's biological thriller *Contagion*, you'll become squirmingly aware of just how much sharing we unconsciously do every day. In fact, the filmmaker hits the ground running so abruptly with his new viral epidemic movie that nervous laughter rippled through the theatre as the audience quickly realized the viability of *Contagion*'s timely premise.

Gwyneth Paltrow plays Beth, a woman returning to the US from Hong Kong, where she has unknowingly contracted a virus that conspiracy theorist/blogger Alan Krumwiede (Jude Law) — who clues in early and tries to blow the whistle on the severity of the threat — later describes as "Godzilla, King Kong and Frankenstein all in one." Symptoms include fever, a nasty cough and, in the final throes, violent seizures. Beth's son is next to contract the infection, inspiring her husband (Matt Damon) — after he's diagnosed as immune — to quarantine himself and his daughter in their suburban home while scientific authorities race to locate Patient Zero and de-

velop a vaccine. As the camera looms over the multitude of public surfaces we collectively touch on a regular basis, the robust virus gains momentum at a staggering rate, infecting an estimated eight million people in its first twelve days of existence. Public hysteria mounts as news of the pandemic spreads, supplies of a supposed homeopathic cure are limited, and the ensuing riots, looting and home invasions sadly reflect the inevitable ugliness of human nature.

Though *Contagion* is by no means a conventional horror exhibit, Soderbergh (the *Ocean's* trilogy, 2002's *Solaris*) may have crafted the most frightening movie of the year. The chameleonic director once again proves himself not only to be a deft storyteller, he also demonstrates how expertly he can direct a cast so star-studded (including Kate Winslet, Laurence Fishburne and Marion Cotillard, among others) that it could've been downright distracting in someone else's hands. Instead, each actor is utterly effective as Scott Z. Burns' fast-paced script brings into eerily sharp focus just how intimately we all interact on this volatile ball of dirt and what startling effect a severe viral outbreak could have on humanity. In the wake of H1N1, SARS, and the like, the realism of the paranoid-inducing events will have your skin crawling long after you've left the theatre and dipped your self in Purell.

TREVOR TUMINSKI

SHOOT THE MOON

APOLLO 18

Starring Warren Christie, Ryan Robinson and Lloyd Owen
Directed by Gonzalo López-Gallego
Written by Brian Miller and Cory Gooden
Alliance

The eleven-year-old me would have loved *Apollo 18*. That kid – a monster-loving space geek who wrote letters to NASA astronauts and thought Stephen King hung the moon – wouldn't have yet seen *The Blair Witch Project* or *Paranormal Activity*, and would have been scared shitless by *Apollo 18*'s convincing found-footage conceit. She wouldn't have minded that the characters are as thin as the lunar atmosphere they're bouncing through, or that the nature of the film's creatures, when it's finally revealed, is downright laughable.

As it turns out, the modern-day me of undiscussed age didn't mind much, either. Though it's marred by uneven pacing and crater-sized plot holes, *Apollo 18* is a mostly entertaining, frequently spooky sci-fi flick that favours the slow build-up over the big reveal. Not much happens, but for the most part it goes about not happening in an effectively creepy way.

Supposedly culled from 84 hours of suppressed NASA footage, *Apollo 18* purports to document the last manned flight to the moon. It's obvious from the beginning that the movie's three astronauts are



completely screwed. Besides the unseen moon monsters that do mean things to them, such as stealing their flag and beating up their lunar module when no one's looking, the mostly likeable but stunningly bland spacemen are soon faced with the harsh reality of their situation: their government has knowingly sent them into a hostile environment, mostly just to see (and document) what will happen. It's here that *Apollo 18* takes small steps to set itself apart from the films that it imitates. Spanish director Gonzalo López-Gallego borrows liberally from both *Blair Witch* and *Paranormal Activity*, but he adds plenty of paranoia and unwelcome voyeurism.

The film is edited with a sure hand by *My Steady Valentine* remake director Patrick Lussier, but it lags a bit in the second half and feels like it could have been fifteen minutes shorter. Unfortunately, that would have left the running time at just over an hour. That is, ultimately, the film's biggest problem: even at 88 minutes, there's just not enough story to go around. Still, it's a tense, paranoid little thriller that should find its niche among grown-up space geeks who don't mind their monsters a little – okay, a lot – on the silly side.

APRIL SMELLINGS

BOWEN BUCKLES

SUPER HYBRID

Starring Shannon Beckner, Gied Fehr and Ryan Kennedy
Directed by Eric Vallée
Written by Benjamin Carr
Shohei Media

Know what's pretty cool? When what you're expecting to be yet another shit-ass CGI monster movie turns

out to be a really fun, energetic and fairly gory little pulper instead. Silly concept? Check. Utterly ass-head script? Check. Only marginally convincing effects? Check. But it's a killer vehicle movie and, well, you know how I get about those, especially when they're not completely awful.

Super Hybrid takes place almost entirely within the confines of an underground police impound garage over the course of a single night, during which a mysterious black car is towed in after a fatal collision. Our dramatic personae include mechanic and Ripley stand-in Tilda (Shannon Beckner), a handful of wisecracking grease monkeys, Ray the Ass-hole Boss (Gied Fehr), and the object of his harassment, the hot secretary (Melanie Papalia).

What none of these night-shifters realize is that the lost wreck to arrive is actually a self-repairing, shape-shifting, human-hating badass, given eternal infernal life by a black, Southern, Lowcountry thrang under the hood. No logos or trademarks are visible, but the sundry vehicular incarnations will look familiar even to the untuned eye: a late '70s Chevy Nova, a candy-apple red Corvette, a late '60s Cadillac, one of those suburban dad-station wagons with the faux-wood panelling, and a way-macho pickup truck. (We do eventually get some semblance of an explanation, but it's a bit of a buzzkill and best ignored.)

As mangled bodies pile up, the dwindling survivors are forced to quit bickering and devise battle and escape plans. Why don't they just leave? Well, because they can't get past the monster machine to the main entrance, and several days earlier Ray welded the emergency exits shut. "To stop the break-ins and keep the junkies out." Oh Ray, you big dumb-head, it's now totally appropriate that you should die horribly at some point.

Did I enjoy this one because my expectations were somewhat erroneously lowered to begin with? That





The Clinic: It's all inside that couloir

may have been part of it. But why risk it when there's almost non-stop killer vehicle carnage to be had? Strap yourselves in, kids.

JOHN W. BROWN

NONE IN THE OVEN

THE CLINIC

Starring Tabrett Bethell, Andy Whitfield and Freya Stafford
Written and directed by James Rabbitts
Image

Anyone expecting inside-style alienzergate based on the lurid cover art will surely be disappointed by writer/director James Rabbitts' *The Clinic*. This slower-paced thriller inspired by true events is much more interested in building a mystery than executing jolts and gore.

It's Christmas Eve in Australia, 1979. A young expectant couple (played by Andy Whitfield and Tabrett Bethell) that has previously suffered through a tragic miscarriage drives cross-country for a family gathering. While stopping to rest at a roadside motel for the night, the wife disappears from the room.

When she awakens in a grimy industrial building, she finds herself with stitches on her belly and no baby — her greatest fears made flesh. She finds four other women in the same predicament and the hunt for answers, and babies, is on. Who has taken their unborn children, and why? Who is the shadowy couple watching the events via security cam? And who is the woman, scalpel in hand, that's hunting the would-be mothers down?

While not perfect (some of the plot twists are underdeveloped or just plain flat), *The Clinic* scores more hits than misses. The mystery is drawn out slowly with intermittent clues, and while it doesn't always gel, it never feels like Rabbitts and company are just going through the motions, either. Where the

film succeeds without question, though, is with its heroine. She's not a blithering idiot, nor a badass "mama bear" — she's an everyday woman in an extraordinary situation, determined to get her child back without sacrificing her own humanity. Bravo to Bethell (TV's *Legend of the Seeker*) for balancing vulnerability and determination so well here.

Not without its blemishes, *The Clinic* nevertheless occupies that safe zone between masterpiece and shambler. Cared mostly by its strong lead performance and some clever twists, it could certainly be a lot worse, especially considering the state of most direct-to-video horror.

RON MCKENZIE

WHAT'S IN A NUMBER?

51

Starring Jason London, Rachel Miner and Debra Ratterose
Directed by Jason Covey
Written by Lucy Mulgan
Lionsgate

Readers of these pages are well aware that Syfy original movies typically fall somewhere between made-for-TV trash and direct-to-video garbage. In fairness, they should probably be judged on a different level given that they're mainly designed to distract channel surfers with enough mild violence to keep them tuned in through at least one commercial break. At worst, they're hilariously unwatchable (e.g. *Carmy*) and, at best, hilariously watchable (e.g. *Sharktopus*). 51 lands somewhere between those two extremes: bad enough to smother through, but not so terrible that you'll have to choose between turning it off and vomiting in disgust.

The film opens with a group of celebrity journalists visiting Area 51 to prove all of that alien conspiracy stuff is a load of hooshy. But guess what? It isn't, and the aliens pick that night to break free. A shape-shifting creature begins mimicking scientists and soldiers before a weird monster appears that looks like what would happen if H.R. Giger's *Alien* and *Pulp* posthead creature designs had a baby in a pile of latex and K-Y Jelly. Everyone with a gun gets bumped off, while the journalists meet a kind-hearted smartypants alien with a plan. It's all pretty silly and stupid, but openly so. That said, prepare to lower your expectations to subterranean levels for this one and brace yourself for endless sequences borrowed from *Aliens* and *The Thing* with Tide commercial-quality acting and rubbery effects.

Lionsgate's DVD release is barebones, boasting only a brief featurette. But honestly, you need a commentary track with a disinterested director explaining how he had six weeks to create a monster movie to fill a Syfy time slot? 51 is undeniably cheap, cheesy and redundant. However, it's also fairly fun with mercifully minimal CGI and more gore than you'd expect from a TV movie (perhaps the DVD offers an unrated cut?). If you're desperate for something to watch on deep cable at 3 a.m., 51 will keep you awake.

PHIL BROWN

NO WAY TO TREAT A ZOMBIE

DEADGIRL

Starring Shiloh Fernandez, Noah Segan and Jenny Spain
Directed by Marcel Sarmiento and Gock Harel
Written by Brent Haaga
Dark Sky

Unconventional flicks such as *Fido*, *28* and *Grave* are good at using zombie tropes to explore the stickier side of life: how far humans will go for love, what defines humanity? And at first glance, *Deadgirl* seems to be running along that same philosophical vein. Quickly, however, this coming-of-age morality tale takes a plot dive straight off a cliff, dragging any potential for ethical discussion (or creepy zombie action) right along with it.

Rickie (Shiloh Fernandez, *Red Riding Hood*) and JT (Noah Segan, *Brok*) seem like typical guys. They skip school, drink in abandoned buildings and hate their absentee parents. One day, they break into an old asylum (groan) and, in the basement behind a locked door, they find an undead girl strapped to a gurney. Rape scenes ensue. (Hint?) More guys come along, who also take turns with the dead girl, while JT's behaviour becomes increasingly obsessive and manipulative. When he learns that the dead girl can infect other people, he embarks on a mission to kidnap more girls

to turn into undead sex slaves.

Trent Haaga's (*Citizen Tux: Toxic Avenger*) skimpy script leaves the actors a lot of awkward pauses and repetitive dialogue, but what really kills



Deadgirl is how many plot leaps and assumptions the film takes to reach the end of its story. Not to mention that the characters' decisions are never believable and that, well, zombies just aren't sexy. Teenage guys might be horny, but they aren't all power-hungry, necrophilic misogynists who would do anything to get laid.

It's difficult to watch a film like this, one with such a lack of respect for the issues it brings up, especially after seeing *The Girl Next Door*, a film which attacks similar issues of sexual abuse and group mentality head-on, without self-indulgence. *Deadgirl* is too busy failing to land one-liners and trying to squeeze in a couple of gore gags to be pushing any envelopes. The term "dead sexy" is not meant to be taken literally.

JESSA SOBCZUK

BOUND BY BLOOD

HIGANJIMA: ESCAPE FROM VAMPIRE ISLAND

Starring Hideo Ishiguro, Dai Watanabe and Akira Mizukawa

Directed by Kim Tae-gyun

Written by Koji Matsumoto and Genta Tetsuya
Warner Bros.

This is the part where I say something witty about how vampires have been done to death, but even that's played out. It has become a cliché to say vampires are cliché and that very notion makes me sad. Luckily, this movie does not.

Higanjima: Escape from Vampire Island, which marks Korean director Kim Tae-gyun's Japanese-language debut and is based on the original fang-ed manga (fang?) by Koji Matsumoto, revolves around Akira (Hideo Ishiguro), a typical high school student with a typical group of friends and a fairly typical existence. That is until a strange woman named Rei (Akemi Mizukawa) informs him that his missing brother (Dai Watanabe) is on a remote island overrun with vampires. Naturally he's hesitant to believe this, until he and his friends are attacked by a vampire assassin. They're saved by Rei who convinces them to go to the island on a rescue mission. Once there, it's revealed that they were actually brought in as food and plenty of blood, guts and sword-fighting ensues.

At its heart, this is an old-school kung fu movie, as the combat and bloodshed tend to take precedence over any real scares. This isn't necessarily a bad thing because the fight scenes between the humans and the throngs of vampire minions never gets old. However, the movie has some issues with tone, as the serious emotional scenes tend to clash with the over-the-top fight sequences. Not helping is the CGI, which is beyond awful and really just makes one long for the days when these types of movies had the balls to use real explosions. The acting is top-notch, though, and the story is intriguing enough to keep one invested until the end. Plus, any movie that features enhanced vampires with large biomechanical arms is pretty goddamn kick-ass. Or at the very least, far from cliché.

MIKE BEARD-SALL



OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE GETS A LITTLE GAMEY

DOUBLE DOG

TRUTH OR DARE: A CRITICAL MADNESS

Sub Rosa Studios

Everyone's played Truth or Dare at least once, but most of us have never thought about making it into a movie. Enter this dud about a dude who walks in on his cheating wife and proceeds to go crazy, reverting back to a time when he mutilated himself with a razor while playing Truth or Dare in the schoolyard. After spending time in a psych ward, he's released and immediately goes on a hilarious killing spree that sees him driving over a baby in a stroller and then chasing down a little-leaguer with a chainsaw. Too bad the body count can't make up for the shitty acting and a storyline that becomes increasingly convoluted. Double dog dare you to watch it without hitting the fast-forward button!



BODY COUNT: 17

TIME UNTIL FIRST NAKED GIRL: 73 seconds

MAZE OF MUTILATION

SPORTKILL

Industry Works

I like a movie that rubs me the wrong way and *Sportkill* made me feel uncomfortable for all of the right reasons. In it, high-stakes gamblers abduct people and force them to commit atrocities on each other (e.g. cutting off limbs, drinking blood). Each contestant must then murder one of the hapless victims in order to live another day, without any promise of madness or hope of rescue. Some of the competitors revel in the killings, while others rebel and are punished by being forced to crawl around in an extremely cramped, underground maze filled with corpses and deadly traps. Yes, it's a very low-budget affair riding the last vestige of the torture porn wave, but still worth a watch, especially if tight spaces make you squirm.



BODY COUNT: 15

TIME UNTIL FIRST NAKED GIRL: 54 minutes

FINDERS CREEPERS

HIDDEN

Confusion Films

Trish has had a pretty shitty year. Not only was she orphaned, finding her parents murdered in their bedroom, she's also about to get kicked out of school because she can't afford tuition. But she hopes her luck will change for the better when she enters a strange game wherein she and a bunch of other contestants wander the woods looking for a hidden cache of money. Bummer that there's also a killer waiting there to hack off their limbs with a machete. Despite an interesting premise, *Hidden* devolves into yet another no-budget flick with a cast of cardboard characters (slut, stoner, redneck, etc.) who die in predictable, boring ways. If you go down to the woods today, you're in for a big, fat disappointment.



BODY COUNT: 10

TIME UNTIL FIRST NAKED GIRL: Sorry, no nudity whatsoever!

RUE MORQUE HITS THE 2011 TORONTO
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
TO SURVEY THE LATEST, GREATEST AND GRISUEST GENRE
FILMS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

TERROR IN THE AISLES

REVIEWS BY

DAVE ALEXANDER, STUART F. ANDREWS, PHIL BROWN,
MONICA S. KUEBLER, AARON VON LUPTON, SEAN PLUMMER,
TREVOR TUMINSKI AND ERIC VELLETTTE

THE AWAKENING UK

Nick Murphy

Rookie director Nick Murphy teams with veteran British horror writer Stephen Volk (*Gothic*, *The Guardian*) for this classic English ghost story that unnerves through atmosphere, dread and human tragedy. Set in the early 20th century, a ghostbusting skeptic is invited to a boarding school to investigate what she assumes to be a hoax but soon realizes is a very personal haunting. A suggestive ghost story in the spirit of *The Others*, *The Awakening's* delicate balance of creeping suspense and genuine jump scares—though subtle and gore-free—contains at least one scene that's sure to unnervingly harden horror fans. A haunting yarn from a promising director.

FB

THE DAY USA

Doog Aamioleski

Apocalypse fatigue sets in with yet another movie about desperate survivors wandering around the woods in a world that's broken for unexplained reasons. *The Day* brings little to this formula other than some talented name actors, including Dominic Monaghan, Shawn Ashmore, Sherryn Shortman and Ashley Bell, who struts the show as the most ruthless ass-kicker among the five survivors who take refuge in an old farmhouse against a tribe of cannibals. It looks appropriately bleak and has some great kills, but also suffers from some bad dialogue, clunky exposition and cheap-ass CG. It's the end of the world as we know it, and I feel meh... DA

THE INCIDENT France

Alexandre Courtes

In this straight-ahead shocker, three rocker dudes who work as kitchen staff in an insane asylum find themselves in a whole lot of trouble one night when the power goes out and the inmates escape. In a brilliant stroke, the movie is set in the '80s, thus eliminating the question of using cellphones. The dark, claustrophobic setting and sleazy, creepy villains make *The Incident* a tense and atmospheric film, rife with unbearable scenes of bodily harm. The lead characters lack development and the dialogue is noticeably basic but this only adds to the movie's minimalist, old-school charm. A grim and nasty good time. AVL

INTRUDERS Spain/England

Juan Carlos Fresnadillo

Spanish director Juan Carlos Fresnadillo's follow-up to the superior horror sequel *28 Weeks Later* (2007), *Intruders*, tells the parallel story of two children—one a Spanish boy, the other an English girl—being menaced by Hollowface, a featureless phantom who enters their bedrooms at night to steal away their faces. Olive Owen stars as the girl's father, who (they have some connection to the genuinely scary apparition. Fresnadillo's dark fable shares much in common with Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* in its reliance on children to tell a terrifying tale, and is all the more affecting because of its protagonists' vulnerability. SP

JUAN OF THE DEAD

Spain/Cuba Alejandro Bruguera

For those not yet sick of *Dead Alive* wannabe zombie sploshstick mayhem, this will probably come as a welcome treat. Fifty years after Castro's revolution, Cuba finds itself in the middle of another uprising—the ubiquitous zombie apocalypse and all the gory, silly fun that entails. Caught in the middle is the hapless Juan and his pack of ridiculous henchmen, who are forced to slice and dice their way through hordes of the undead with all manner of household implements. The unique Cuban setting, a charming cast and some weirdly over-the-top splatter set pieces help breathe a few gasps of life into a俗genre that won't stay dead. SFA

KILL LIST UK

Ben Wheatley

Though it indulges in bloody violence, and hints at something arcane, you'd never guess that *Kill List* is anything but a hitman flick until the last half-hour. That's when things get weird, scary and rather confusing. When a professional killer with marital problems and his partner take a job that plunges them into some increasingly creepy, conspiratorial territory (involving snuff films and a high-ranking politician), he begins to doubt his own sanity. Director Ben Wheatley calls this an allegory for Arthurian legend, and while the ending is a head-scratcher, this well-directed journey hits hard with sharp dialogue, poor performances and some narrative plodders. DA

LIVID France

Julien Maury & Alexandre Bustillo

The duo behind nihilistic fan favorites *Inside* (2007) return with a gorgeous piece of work that proved to be a divisive horror flick at this year's TIFF. Trading the graphic violence of their debut for a more fairy tale sensibility, *Livid* stars Chloé Coullaud as Lucy, caregiver to a comatose old lady rotting away in an empty mansion. When Lucy's friends break in one night for some treasure hunting, things quickly dive into Italian horror-inspired nightmare logic and never look back. One demented, dreamlike scenario follows another with only abstract tangents making sense of images that even at their most familiar possess some underlying weirdness that renders them hypnotic and perverse. SFA

LOVELY MOLLY USA

Edoardo Ghezzo

Director Edoardo Ghezzo's (*The Blair Witch Project*) latest is a bit of a disappointment. Part haunted-house movie, part psychological drama, *Lovely Molly* is the tale of a young, recovering heroin addict who moves into her childhood home with her new husband. There, she confronts demons, both real and emotional. In an attempt to be narratively complex, Ghezzo allows for more than one interpretation of the events, but the ambiguity is handled awkwardly and seems more like a reluctance to commit to one storyline. Still, there's enough here to keep audiences involved, and the numerous plot twists will tick in

your brain long after you leave the theatre.
AVL

A MONSTER IN PARIS France
Bibi Bergeron

After the success of *Shark Tale*, Bibi Bergeron returned to France to focus on a personal project. The result, *A Monster in Paris*, is a fun, fear-jerking, animated homage to classic horror and so-fi. When two pals accidentally irradiate an insect while fiddling around in a hydroponic laboratory, the bug grows to freakish size. But while the police chase the Cronenbergian creature, it becomes the toast of Paris nightclubs. Who knew giant bugs have lovely singing voices? Here's hoping that future monster kids will one day remember the references to *The Fly*, *Christine*, *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Back to the Future*. **EV**

THE MOTH DIARIES
Canada/Ireland Mary Harron

Director Mary Harron (*American Psycho*) was quick to classify *The Moth Diaries* as a coming-of-age story rather than a horror movie during the film's introduction at TIFF. More a speculative counterpart to the genre (much like *The Nature of Nicholas*), the supernatural is used here to convey the distrust and uncertainty inherent in the ever-evolving landscape of teenage friendships, as evidenced by Rebecca (Sarah Bolger) believing a vampire is stalking her best friend at their boarding school. Though it's infused with elements of the classic lesbian bloodsucker tale *Carrie*, horror fans will likely be disappointed by this tame effort in which the goniest scene takes place during a hallucination. **MSK**

THE SKIN I LIVE IN Spain
Pedro Almodóvar

Pedro Almodóvar's first foray into genre cinema isn't traditional horror, but his story of a surgeon (Antonio Banderas) who keeps a bandaged woman (Elena Anaya) locked up in his clinic explores the cruelty and coldness of the human heart, and definitely takes its cues from Georges Franju's *Eyes Without a Face* (1960). Based on the Thierry Jonquet novel *Fanfarlo*, Almodóvar's latest reunites him with long-time collaborator Banderas, who turns in a clinical and icy performance that rewrites the mad scientist movie with undertones of melodrama. Don't expect jump scares from this elegant film, but the chills are all too real. **SP**

SNOWTOWN Australia
Justin Kurzel

This impressive first feature from Justin Kurzel is an enthralling account of the real-life multiple murders committed by charismatic serial killer John Bunting and three accomplices in South Australia, in the '60s. Told mostly from the perspective of Bunting's teenaged protégé (a moving por-

trayal by non-soldier Lucas Pittaway), the chilling storyline—which unfolds in a bleak, cinema vérité style—hinges upon Daniel Henshall's meeting him as Bunting and the startling influence he had on his inner circle while strategically choosing victims from the community's fringes. Amazingly, *Snowtown* could've even been darker had the group's alleged cannibalism been included here, though the grisly tale isn't softened much by the omission. **TT**

TWIST USA
Francis Ford Coppola

At the screening for this self-financed and apparently very personal film, director Francis Ford Coppola mentioned that it was based on a dream. Mis-take! The result is amateur nonsense about an alcoholic jerk (Nat Kilkner) who gets sucked into a small town's murder mystery and a related dream world. You'll see Bruce Dern goering it up as the town sheriff, an abandoned hotel where a bunch of kids were murdered, a vampire dream-ballerina, hilariously cliché gay kids, the ghost of Poe, bad digital effects and about five minutes of 3-D (seriously!). Hate to say it, but perhaps Coppola should trade his camera for some NyQuil. **DA**

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT KEVIN UK
Lynne Ramsay

This artsy variation on *The Red Seed* (based on the award-winning 2003 novel by Lionel Shriver) details the fractured family life of Kevin—a deeply disturbed boy (Ezra Miller) who executes a high school massacre—through the pained memories of his emotionally distant mother (Tilda Swinton). Watching Kevin mature from a cold child, prone to trashing rooms and filling dumpsters out of spite, into a sociopathic teen capable of hiding family pets in garbage disposals and disciplining his sister with drain cleaner is undeniably terrifying. This unconventional horror was certainly one of the more unsettling films to screen at the festival, particularly for parents. **FB**

YOU'RE NEXT USA
Adam Wingard

Prolific filmmaker Adam Wingard jetsets the moodiness of last year's *A Hologram Way to Die (RMF 14)* for a shot at mainstream audiences with this but tweak of the home-invasion subgenre. Centred on a family gathering in the country that's violently interrupted by masked assassins, Wingard manages to elicit both gripping tension and unexpected laughs by occasionally reducing the dysfunctional siblings to petty squabbling amidst copious maimings and gory deaths. Some have charged that the tonal see-sawing is unerving, but those willing to go along with this stylish thrill ride's twist on the "final girl" trope are in for a fun night at the movies. **TT**



TIFF HAVANA (clockwise from top) Festival posters, *Live! Twist!*, *The Skin I Live In*, *The Moth Diaries*, and (opposite) *You're Next*

RESCUES



CRAPPY ANNIVERSARY

HALLOWEEN II (1981) Blu-ray

Starring Jamie Lee Curtis, Ronald Plesance and Charles Cyphers
 Directed by Rick Rosenthal
 Written by John Carpenter and Debra Hill
 Universal

Considering the number of times John Carpenter's *Halloween* has been released on DVD, it's amazing that Rick Rosenthal's sequel never received more than a couple of anemic editions. Maligned by critics for replacing the original's Hitchcockian suspense with *Friday the 13th*-style sex and gore, but beloved by slasher fans for probably the same reasons, *Halloween II* now gets the Blu-ray treatment in honour of its 30th anniversary.

The good news? The movie has never looked better, and though it does reveal plenty of grain, nicks and scrapes in places, the overall picture is clearer and has a darker ambience. Sound-wise, a very full DTS 5.1 adds new levels of detail, though a lossless audio track would've made better use of the format.

The key extras consist of an alternate ending and deleted scenes, taken from the tamer TV version developed in the '80s. Ironically, that cut was more in

line with Rosenthal's original vision before Carpenter injected the movie with more violence and sucked out some of the character development during post-production. So rather than just offering up a bunch of bloodless extra footage, why not go the distance and include both versions in their entirety?

There is also the full-length documentary *Terror in the Asiles* (1984), the famous theatrically released compilation of horror movie moments from the 1950s to 1980s, hosted by Plesance and Nancy Allen (Carré). Considering that before this it was only available on VHS, this is quite the bonus for

'80s horror buffs. But this is *Halloween II*'s 30th anniversary! So where's the special behind-the-scenes doc? The commentary track? The part where Rosenthal cusses out Carpenter for calling his movie "as scary as *Quincy*"?

There's a couple of geeky issues too. As widely reported online, Universal inexplicably removed producer Moustapha Akkad's name from the screen credits and replaced it with their own, in a mismatched font to boot. (The studio has

since promised to fix this.) Additionally, the memorable skull pumpkin artwork – one of the era's finest posters – has been changed to something more suited to the putrid Rob Zombie-directed franchise.

With its eye-opening look, the addition of *Terror*

in the Asiles and a low retail price, you'd be crazier than Michael Myers not to pick this up. But if you think this is a worthy 30th anniversary release, you deserve to have him pay you a visit.

AARON VON LUPTON

CRAZY BALDHEADS

BLUE SUNSHINE (1978) VHS

Starring Zalman King, Deborah Winters and Mark Goddard
 Written and directed by Jeff Lieberman
 Flamingo Film Company

There are bad trips, and then there's *Blue Sunshine*. Tapping into lingering guilt and fear over the 1960s counterculture of free love and freer drug use, Jeff Lieberman's offbeat and distinctive horror/sci-fi entry makes even the worst acid flashback seem mild by comparison – a hit or two of the titular drug will implant murderous thoughts in your head that won't even emerge until ten years later.

When his friend suddenly goes insane at a party, throwing three women into a fireplace, Jerry Zipkin (Zalman King) loses his blood-crazed pal in front of an eighteen-wheeler to stop his murder spree. But when the cops come a-knockin', Jerry is forced to

clear his name by uncovering the secret behind a wave of psychopaths in bad wigs committing similarly bizarre murders across the city. After investigating a local politician (Mark Goddard), Jerry realizes that the killers all attended Stanford University, where they apparently took chromosome-damaging acid. Now, a decade later, the victims lose all their hair, experience painful headaches and, eventually, attempt to brutally kill anyone within arm's reach.

If you haven't seen this flawed but memorable anti-drug genre effort, what are you waiting for? An ambidextrous premise, the weirdest army of killers since *The Incredibly Strange Creatures...*, and the best mall-based horror finale outside of *Dawn of the Dead* make *Blue Sunshine* an essential slab of disco-era exploitation. It's the film's low-budget vibe and Charles Gross' unnerving score that ultimately help it succeed in spite of its many flaws. Suffering from spurious plot developments, *Blue Sunshine* often has difficulty developing tension – one scene, in which Jerry's elderly elevator passengers are delaying Jerry's attempts to stop a babysitter from attacking two kids, aims for Hitchcock but never comes close. Only the tripe-act intro and the ending, in which Jerry tries to take out a rampaging ex-football player with a tranquilizer gun, really work – but these bookends are exceptional enough that the less-successful scenes are soon forgotten.

While this new release doesn't stack up to the definitive two-disc edition released by Synapse in 2003, the film itself remains a 1970s exploitation classic of the first order: a deadly hippie hangover overrun by killers making war, not love.

PAUL CORUPE



BLACK'S MASS

THE PYX (1973) DVD

Starring Karen Black, Christopher Plummer and Donald Pilon
Directed by Harvey Hart
Written by John Russell and Robert Schift
Scorpion Releasing

Never underestimate the power of Karen Black in lingerie. As a non-linear detective thriller with a satanic twist, *The Pyx* may be a frustratingly plodding exercise but it still manages a handful of interesting turns — mostly revolving around the actress losing the majority of her clothes.

The film sees Anglophone homicide detective Henderson (Christopher Plummer) and his French-speaking partner Paquette (Donald Pilon) called in to investigate the death of high-priced prostitute Elizabeth Lucy (Black), who fell to her death from an apartment balcony. Splitting the narrative between a flashback of Elizabeth's downfall — getting into heroin, meeting mysteriously powerful brothel clients — and the present police investigation that looks to prove that the death was a murder, we soon discover the key to her demise is a pyx (in Catholicism, a container used to hold a communion wafer) found around

her neck. As more prostitutes turn up dead, Henderson sets off to confront the devil-worshipping cult that he's convinced bumped off Elizabeth.

Shot on the streets of Montreal by director Harvey Hart, a tax shelter film specialist who only dipped into horror once, *The Pyx* — also known under the spoiler-ready title *The Hooker Cult Murders* — is too restrained and slow to be considered one of Canada's more notable genre entries (but it is one of the only bilingual horror films, seamlessly combining French and English dialogue throughout).

Though Plummer puts in a good performance, the film will mostly appeal to fans of Ms. Black — it's one of her meatier genre roles, she sings a few songs on the soundtrack and, of course, does that sheer white robe before she's tied into the black mass. She remains the primary reason to catch *The Pyx*, an otherwise bleak Canadian occult thriller that suffers in comparison to the other satanic delights of 1970s horror cinema.

PAUL CORUPE



The Exterminator: Revenge cuts like a knife.

PEST CONTROL

THE EXTERMINATOR (1980) Blu-ray/DVD

Starring Robert Ginty, Christopher George and Steve James
Written and directed by James Glickenhaus
Synapse

Everyone knows who to call if there's something strange in your neighbourhood, but what if there's something villainous and heinous, like a psychopathic senator with a sweet tooth for soldering-iron sodomy, or a crew of merciless thugs? Obviously, you're gonna call Charles Bronson! But wait...the line's busy. Your next choice: *The Exterminator*. Narrowly escaping torture and death at the hands of the Viet Cong, John Eastland (Robert Ginty) returns home to New York where citizens are being terrorized by street gang The Ghetto Ghouls and extorted by mobsters. When the law fails to protect the innocent, and his friend (Steve James) is beaten to a pulp in a racially motivated attack, Eastland becomes the *Exterminator*, a fully-strapped angel of death bent on eradicating the element that threatens his community. Lukewarm on his trail is Detective Dalton (Christopher George), a soft-boiled wisecracker who steps away from his hot dog long enough to deduce that the *Exterminator* isn't just some schlub who's had enough, but rather a damaged ex-soldier seasoned in making his enemies pay dearly for their transgressions.

And pay they do: death by automatic rifle, hungry rats and an oversized meat grinder are just some of the fates awaiting the various pimps, pedophiles and perry politicians who've pushed the *Exterminator* too far. Adding fuel to the fire is the CIA, which is monitoring both, hoping to clean up the entire mess before election season licks into high gear. An explosive three-way showdown at the film's conclusion wrecks things up, but not

too tightly, as the 1984 sequel would prove.

Lacking the emotional depth of *Taxi Driver*, and the pathos and hardness that Bronson brought to *Death Wish*, *The Exterminator* remains a second-tier revenge flick, though not without its distinct charms. Writer/director James Glickenhaus wastes zero time getting to the gory goods, and in place of finesse lies the singular vision of gritty thrills, not to mention a body count that could make Jason Voorhees blush. The entertainment value runs high, and the scenes in the pre-sterilized Times Square make it a keeper.

Synapse's new Blu-ray looks and sounds better than ever, and with some of the violence and chaos restored for the director's cut, *The Exterminator* should be a welcome addition to the shelves of vigilante film fans.

TAL ZIMMERMAN

EXERCISE IN FUTILITY

THE DEVIL WITHIN HER (1975) DVD

Starring Joan Collins, Eileen Atkins and Ralph Bates
Directed by Peter Szably
Written by Stanley Price and Nelo De Angeles
Scorpion Releasing

Consider *The Devil Within Her* off-brand horror, sort of like those O-shaped cereals you mom bought that came in a bag instead of a box and didn't quite taste the same as Cheerios. Assembling bits and pieces from *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Exorcist* and *The Omen*, this British-lensed production is a vaguely unsatisfying bowl of B-movie badness that has Joan Collins as a new mother whose possessed baby wreaks havoc on London.

Collins was no stranger to trash in the 1970s, appearing in such questionable productions as *The Stud*, *The Bitch* and *Empire of the Ants*, but this has to be her most ridiculous role of the decade. She's completely miscast as Lucy, a former stripper now preparing for her first child with her rich Italian husband (Ralph Bates).

The birth appears to go fine, but something seems a little worrisome when the little monster claws poor Mommy's face, bites a priest and knocks off a nurse in short order. Only then does Lucy conveniently remember that her firstborn was cursed by Hercules (George C. Scott), a sinful dwarf who also worked at the strip club, and whose advances she once spurned.



The Devil Within Her
Total maniacism

Now, Lucy can't help but see the dwarf's twisted, laughing face whenever she spies her cooing son. Things go from bad to worse and, after the child manages a particularly spectacular beheading, an Italian nun (Eileen Atkins) arrives to exorcise Hercules or Satan or whoever.

Director Peter Sissy handled some Hammer films earlier in his career, but he has trouble making this horror effort scary in the slightest, all the baby's attacks are kept off screen, probably because actually showing a cute, twelve-pound baby punching grown-ups in the face and chowing down on holy men would have made the film even more ridiculous than it already is. Even comes by Donald Pleasance as the family doctor ("This baby doesn't want to be born!") and Caroline Munro as Lucy's confidant can't dispel the notion that *The Devil Within Her* isn't possessed by the spirit of a demon, but just an empty and unfilled sense of misplaced camp.

PAUL CORUPE

HARDER THAN HITCHCOCK

DRESSED TO KILL (1980) DVD

Starring Michael Caine, Angie Dickinson and Nancy Allen
Written and directed by Brian De Palma
RGN

Writerdirector Brian De Palma's initiation with Alfred Hitchcock has never been more obvious than in his 1980 giallo-esque slasher *Dressed to Kill*. Yet, for all its visual and narrative tributes to the Master of Suspense — including a steamy update of *Psycho*'s shower scene that's particularly erotic in this unrated cut — De Palma still proves he's got enough storytelling tricks up his sleeve to elevate this dream-like meditation on the nature of attraction and the desire to be wanted above mere mimicry.

Struggling with what she perceives to be her diminishing sexuality, middle-aged



married woman Kate Miller (Angie Dickinson) enlists the counsel of psychiatrist Dr Robert Elliott (Michael Caine) before engaging in a beautifully shot, sensual game of cat-and-mouse set in a museum, which leads to an afternoon tryst with a handsome stranger. De Palma's ingenious camerawork is appropriately voyeuristic as he follows Kate around in lengthy Hitchcockian shots until, while leaving the scene of her unexpected romp, she's totally (and graphically) sliced

up in the elevator by a leather-clad transvestite wielding a straight razor, the only witness a sexy escort named Liz (Nancy Allen).

Enter Detective Marino (a shockingly sweet Dennis Franz) who has no choice but to suspect Liz when her alibi doesn't stick up. Kate's son (Keith Gordon), an aspiring scientist, teams up with Liz to try to find the real killer, with Liz coming dangerously close to being snuffed out by the homicidal he-she in the process. When the blade is eventually linked to old Doc Robert, the unlikely pair set out to trap the slink by using Liz's sexuality as bait, giving De Palma the opportunity to wrap things up in a manner that fully exposes his unending man-love for Hitch.

While it doesn't play as edgy as it undoubtedly did upon its theatrical release, *Dressed to Kill* holds up as brave, bold filmmaking that seduces the senses, all the more given this Blu-ray's warm, strikingly clean transfer and DTS HD Master 5.1 audio track. Unfortunately, there's nothing new in the way of extras but the numerous featurettes carried over from 2001's Special Edition DVD thoroughly detail the struggles De Palma had trying to avoid an X-rating while preserving the film's bloody throat-cuttings. Considering its vintage, a 30th-anniversary retrospective or commentary would've been nice, but as is, it's still pretty gussied up.



TREVOR TUMINSKI

HAWY HALF-BREED

FACE OF THE SCREAMING WEREWOLF (1964) DVD

Starring Lon Chaney Jr., Verge Searle and George Mitchell
Directed by Gilberto Martinez Solares, Rafael Portillo and Jerry Warren
Written by Fernando de Fuentes, Juan Garcia and Jerry Warren
Chaney Flicks

Being a pretty big fan of Lon Chaney Jr. and his lycanthropic escapades, I was happy to review *Face of the Screaming Werewolf*. I was aware that he had made a werewolf film in Mexico late in his career and, having never seen it, I assumed that this was the one. Turns out that it was — and it wasn't. That's because *Face* is another masterpiece from the maestro of re-purposed filmmaking, writer/producer/director Jerry Warren (*Teenage Zombies*, *Frankenstein Island*). So much for my expectations.

Warren, you see, was notorious for taking obscure foreign genre films and re-splicing them together, adding narration and new scenes he wrote and directed using American actors, to make entirely new movies (sort of) for the US market. While this has occasionally been done successfully with other films (think *Godzilla*, *King of the Monsters*), Warren's efforts were often wretched pieces of crapola that made little sense. Such is the case with *Face*, a scant 60-minute thriller cobbed together using

footage from two black-and-white Mexican monster movies — 1960's *La Casa del Terror* (the werewolf film) was originally thinking of) and the 1957 mummy flick, *La Momia Azteca*.

From what I can make out, here's the plot: a woman named Ann Taylor is the subject of an experimental form of hypnosis that reveals she was once an Aztec in another life. Recalling memories of partaking in ancient Mayan rituals, she leads the

scientific/archaeological team involved in the experiments on an excursion to the ruins of the Great Pyramid of Yucatan, where they find two mummies — one an atrophic, long-haired Aztec being; the other, a modern man (Chaney Jr.). After the modern mummy is stolen by a rival scientist and exposed to a procedure that brings it back to life, it turns into a scaring werewolf and runs off into the city to attack people. Meanwhile, the Aztec mummy also escapes and goes off in search of an antique golden breastplate that it needs, kidnapping Ann in the process. Or something.

Despite some atmospheric photography, a pretty interesting score and Chaney Jr.'s few minutes of footage as spirited performance and his last as a werewolf character), the cut-and-paste nature of the film renders it pretty incoherent. Picture quality is poor with grainy, scratchy visuals throughout, and the film's audio does not fare much better. Extras here are limited to trailers and vintage intermission clips. Only Chaney Jr.'s most diehard admirers need seek this one out.

JAMES BURRELL

JUST IN TIME FOR THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION BLU-RAY RELEASE OF **EVIL DEAD II**. WE CATCH UP WITH THE MAN BEHIND THE ICONIC MAKEUP EFFECTS: MARK SHOSTROM

LORD OF THE DEADITES

BY MICHAEL DOYLE

THE NAME MARK SHOSTROM RESONATES WITH FANS OF LURIDLY INVENTIVE SPECIAL MAKEUP EFFECTS. RISING TO PROMINENCE DURING THE 1980s, the Los Angeles native's credits include the Roger Corman-produced *The Slumber Party Massacre* (Don Coscarelli's *The Breakfast Club*, *Phantasm II* and *Phantasm II: Darken*), Stuart Gordon's *Frodo Baggins*, John Carpenter's *Prince of Darkness*, and *A Nightmare on Elm Street 2* and *3*. His signature movie, however, is Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead II* (out November 15 from Lionsgate), which features a riotous extravaganza of outlandish creatures, flying limbs, decomposed flesh and explosive multi-colored vomit that embraced numerous techniques in makeup, animatronics, stop-motion animation and claymation. Shostrom met the challenge head-on, especially with the bloated, sore-titten, fly-blown, demon-possessed Henrietta (pictured below, being worked on by the effects artist), who relentlessly torments the film's already brutalized hero Ash (Bruce Campbell). The three-time Emmy Award-winning effects artist reminisces with *Rue Magazine* about his landmark work on *Evil Dead II*, just in time for the film's special edition 25th anniversary re-release on Blu-ray.

What is your favourite effect in *Evil Dead II*?

One thing that stands out was a simple effect that was actually the first thing we shot. Sam was expecting wanders from me and I was under a lot of pressure. I had to deliver by time and every effect had to work perfectly. The night after I arrived, I was rushed to set and informed that the first effect we were shooting would be the scene where Ash's hand becomes possessed, leading up to the moment he takes it off with the chainsaw. Before that happens, Bruce Campbell has to pin her hand to the floor with a knife and I'd made a gesture hand with a hollow chamber to spurt blood at the right moment. I tested this thing right and left but was still feeling the pressure because

I knew that first impression could—and these guys were expecting me to deliver hundreds of other effects. We prepared for the first take and I got the hand in

position. Bruce stabbed it with the knife and the blood spurted out right on cue. Sam yelled, "Cut," then Bruce looked up and his exact words were, "By God, that sucker worked!" [Laughs] I just felt this tremendous relief.

Tell me your initial ideas for the possessed Henrietta makeup.

I originally wanted to do Henrietta as an emaciated corpse with a lot of her flesh missing, exposing the ribs and hips like in the EC Comics. I thought we could hire some incredibly skinny person for the part because you can always add stuff to them and they'll still look thin. I did some sketches of a dead skinny lady with rotting breasts and flesh buzzing around her. Sam liked the designs but said, "Henrietta is a physically demanding part. I'm going to have this person suspended on wires in makeup. It'll be tough so I want my brother, Ted, to do it." I asked Sam if his brother was skinny and he said, "No, in fact

he's very muscular." I then realised the only way was to make Henrietta a bloated woman with festering wounds all over her.

Did you use any reference materials?

I gave [an assistant] some cash and sent him out to all the adult bookstores in the area. I basically said, "Go out and get me some pictures of naked fat women!"

The poor guy was all embarrassed and spent the whole day running around Los Angeles trying to find pictures of naked fat women.

How would you describe your working relationship with Raimi?

I loved it. Of all the directors I've worked with, Sam is the most decisive. There were something like 700 different shots in *Evil Dead II* and around 135 of them involved makeup effects. When Sam and I were going through the breakdown of all the effects in the script, we went from page

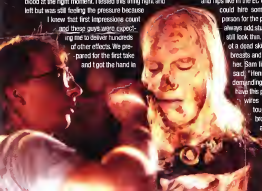
one right through to the very end—over the phone. It took about four hours and Sam would be specific. [He'd reference] a shot that came from page 3, scene 4, and would ask, "What exactly do you mind here?" He'd know in advance which lens he was using, what film stock and what camera speed. That whole film was mapped out in his head, which made my job easy.

Was there anything in the script that you weren't able to realize?

I always thought that one of the coolest things in the script was the Deadites and I actually had discussions with Sam about creating a full-size mechanical Deadite for the movie. I even did some designs for it but we just didn't have the money to do it.

How did working on the film affect your career?

I always refer to it as "the film that just keeps on giving" because it led to me working on *Phantasm II* and other projects. I've realized that a movie like *Evil Dead II* doesn't happen to every makeup artist. I'm just grateful that it happened to me. ♥



CINEMARQUEE

VINTAGE HORROR REISSUES



THE CAT STRIKES BACK

KURONEKO (1968) 34 sep/90

Starring Nobuko Otowa,
Nobuko Otowa and Kiyoko Tachibana
Written and directed by Kaneto Shindo
Criterion Collection

There is no dialogue during the first ten minutes of Kaneto Shindo's *Kuroneko*. The black and white film opens on a small farm, as menacing drumbeats and boisterous feline-like noises add tension to the soundtrack. Suddenly, a group of dirty, desperate-looking samurai appear out of the woods. They drink greedily from the stream in front of the modest, grass-roof farmhouse before going inside. There they confront two terrified women, steal their food, rape and kill them and then disappear back into the landscape. The camera once again lingers on the farm and everything seems peaceful, until smoke starts to billow out of the house as it begins to burn. It's an arresting sequence set in a world that Shindo has explored before.

Anyone who's seen *Onibaba*, the filmmaker's 1964 sister film to *Kuroneko*, will recognize the atmosphere. Both movies are set in feudal, wartime Japan, and feature a mother and daughter-in-law living alone on a farm where they're visited by desperate, dirty men who take from them.

Whereas the dominant image in *Onibaba* is a traditional demon mask, *Kuroneko* (which translates to "black cat") focuses on a different part of the folk-

lore: ghosts and animism. After the women are killed, their scorched corpses lay in the smoldering ruins of the house; a black cat appears and licks blood off of their bodies. Soon we learn that they've returned as vengeful supernatural entities who lure

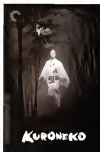
travelling samurai to a house in the woods, where they get them drunk and the daughter, Shige (Kiyoko Tachibana), promises them sex before ripping out their throats with her teeth. (As the traitor proclaims, "Is she demon or ghost? Human or cat?")

Meanwhile, Shige's husband, Dantoku (Kichijiro Nakamura) returns from the war a hero after beheading one of the enemy's greatest warlords. Finding his home burned down, he takes up a post with the governor and is tasked with defeating whoever has been murdering the swordsmen. This of course leads him to the ghosts, who plan to kill him like the rest, not recognizing his regal new self. Nor does he recognize his family at first, but once they figure it out, he spends his nights visiting the ghostly home, making love to his wife. But the women vowed to drink the blood of every last samurai and for breaking her word, Shige must go to hell at the end of

seven days. The mother, Yone (the late Nobuko Otowa, pictured, who was married to Shindo and appeared in most of his films, including *Onibaba*), remains, revealing herself as a literal feline entity, who must face her son in a final showdown.

Though the J-horror of the past decade revived the traditional *onryō* (vengeful ghost, usually female) story as something terrifying — notably with Takashi Shimizu's *Ju-on* series, which also features a black cat — *Kuroneko* presents the spirits as more tragic than malevolent. Among the extras on Criterion's DVD/Blu-ray release is an interview with Japanese film critic Tadahito Sato, who describes the film as a bridge between modern and classic Japanese tales. That's evident in the way it contrasts the traditional supernatural story with human monsters in the form of the samurai, who are almost always depicted as heroes in Japanese culture.

War is also a common theme throughout Shindo's filmography, specifically the horrors of the atomic bomb. (The filmmaker, who turns 100 this year and is still making movies, considers Hiroshima his home.) In *Onibaba*, that horror is manifested in the facial burns suffered by those who wear the mask, and in *Kuroneko* it's metaphorically depicted in the imagery of the charred bodies of the women lying in the burned-out dwelling.



Shindo contrasts this realism with the surreal realm of the spirit house. He uses a masking effect to make the building appear as if it's floating through a bamboo grove, while the insides of it become a stage. He utilizes the makeup, lighting and wirework effects of kabuki theatre to depict Yone dancing through the fog-shrouded rooms, creating a powerfully elegant and eerie atmosphere. The soundtrack by Hikaru Hayashi, who has a long history of composing music for both stage and film, further enhances the very dramatic style.

Criterion delivers a package befitting of such a masterpiece, including a beautiful uncompressed transfer with new subtitles, the trailer, a booklet featuring an essay by film critic Mattland McDonagh, the aforementioned interview with Sato and an hour-long 1998 interview with Shindo. It's frustrating that this last extra doesn't cover *Kuroneko*, because such a powerful, cinematic tale of the supernatural deserves a final word from its creator.

DAVE ALEXANDER

CAME FROM BOWEN'S BASEMENT



DRIVE-INS. DELETE BINS AND OTHER SINS

JUMPING THE WHALE

by John W. Bowen

Double disclaimer. One, I've never read *Moby Dick*. Many of my friends have, and they can be divided into two camps: the ones who say it's a tedious uphill slog, and the ones who say it's one of the great masterpieces of English literature, but also a tedious uphill slog, either way, it's the whole tedious uphill slog part I find off-putting. Two, I absolutely cannot abide Richard Harris. Laurence Olivier and Michael Caine exemplify everything wonderful about that generation of British actors, while sputtering, trembling-lower-lipped Harris is the embodiment of every aspect I find cloying and annoying. So why would I recommend the excrementally awful *Orca* (1977) to the *Are Morgue* faithful? Well, because it's one of the most unintentionally hilarious post-Jaws Bad Animal knock-offs, in which even Harris frequently seems to cringe at the dialogue he's forced to speak.

Harris plays Captain Nolan, a crusty Irish seadog (which you can tell from the holes in his cardigan) hunting great white sharks off the coast of Newfoundland. Just as he's about to make his big score, he's thwarted when the big fish gets a fatal shit-kicking from... well, what? One of Nolan's deckhands informs him that it was a killer whale, a species Nolan seems only dimly aware of despite his years on the job. This is our first solid clue that this character has shit for brains. It will not be our last. More importantly, the sequence establishes that a killer whale is more badass than a great white and therefore this movie simply has to be more badass than *Jaws*, which also featured a crusty Irish seadog (although not a conspicuously retarded one) who just happened to have a boat named *Orca*. Coincidence, I assure you.

Before you can sing "Ladies of Spain," Nolan calls off the shark hunt and sets out to bag him a



live orca to sell to an aquarium, despite the objections of marine biologist Rachel Bedford (an unsmiling but über-edible Charlotte Rampling). They form an uneasy bond. She explains in voice-over: "I was surprised at his ignorance about the animals. To have fished here for so long and to have

learned so little about them amazed me. I was also intrigued by his curiosity; the combination made him seem vulnerable and even attractive. It was that, or I'd been in Newfoundland for too long." (All work and no play on *The Rock* makes Rachel a randy girl.)

Of course, Nolan's plans to capture a whale pod's alpha male go horribly awry when a stray harpoon skewers his pregnant mate, resulting in a graphic miscarriage and causing the bereaved critter to vow revenge. That's right, revenge. *Moby Dick* role reversal. Rachel explains to Nolan (and us) that not only are orcas fantastically, awesomely, astoundingly intelligent, they're also capable of holding a grudge longer than *Ad Rose*. This is supported by additional-exposition from Umilik (Wili Sampson of *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*), the token local native In-

dian dude who speaks in that weird, stilted dialect that you only ever hear indigenous people use in movies. It all strikes an additional chord with Nolan, who feels the whale's pain because he once lost his wife and child to a drunk driver.

Meanwhile, the bereaved behemoth sets about trashing the local harbour, sticking his head out of the water to inspect his handwork every time he wrecks a pier or kills someone. (Had the whale opposable thumbs, it might have clinked beer bottles together rhythmically while taunting, "Nocodassan, come out to plassy-yassay!") Desperate locals urge Nolan to head out to sea for a final showdown to save their lives and livelihoods; Nolan, his crew and, for reasons too absurd to describe here, Rachel and Umilik oblige, leading to a ludicrous life-and-death struggle among icebergs, which the whale lobs at the boat with his head. His fucking head, kids.

In similar fashion to 1978's *The Swarm* (Bowen's Basement, RME87), *Orca* is a big-budget studio effort with more or less competent design and special effects, but the howlingly awful storyline and overwrought dialogue are full-on comedy gold. The schadenfreude of watching Harris attempting to maintain his dignity is just the icing on a fish cake that clearly got left out in... well, you know. Now get the hell out of my basement, and unless you want to piss off a whale, I pitch up this old cardigan.



BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

BY PEDRO CABEZUELO

Scott Tuft is a new name in the comics industry but his first work, Image's upstart monthly horror series *Severed*, already brings with it a fair amount of pedigree. Tuft's co-writer and long-time friend Scott Snyder is the creator of Vertigo's award-winning *American Vampire*; together the duo has conceived a nightmarish tale of broken childhoods, desperate longing and cannibalism.

"When Scott and I first started thinking about *Severed*, we wanted to make a horror where the scares were not fantastical but real, and the gore was a symptom of the horror more than the substance of it," says Tuft. "We also wanted the horror to resonate deep down. We wanted to evoke that fear that you have as a kid — where you're afraid to go to sleep or turn off the light at night. And so we came to fairy tales."

Like many fairy tales, *Severed* begins with a child discovering his life is a lie. Twelve-year-old Jack Garron, a boy growing up in 1916 America with his mother, has just discovered that he was adopted. Determined to learn his true heritage, he goes in search of his real father, an on-the-road musician, by hopping aboard a freight train, unaware of the many dangers ahead. Meanwhile, a mysterious salesman has also been travelling the country, adopting young boys eager for business apprenticeships. What they don't realize is that behind the salesman's gleaming smile are some very sharp teeth.

"The image that resonated with us the most was a monster who eats children," reveals Tuft. "Because we wanted our fairy tale to exist in the real world, we looked to the real world for inspiration. We were voracious in our research on historical serial killers and cannibals — the real-life big bad wolves. There are actually a lot of them out

there and we based our salesman on a collection of them."

And while supernatural elements are strongly limited at first with regards to the salesman's origins, it's the book's more historical and realistic aspects that some readers may find most disturbing. In the first two issues alone, Jack leaves the safety of his country home for the dangers of the big city, is robbed, beaten, thrown out of a moving train and nearly bugged. These brutal encounters serve as a nice contrast to the salesman's bloodier experiences that run parallel to Jack's story.

"We wanted to play with and explore the fear strata," explains Tuft. "What is scarier: a cop stealing all your worldly possessions and tossing you from a moving train, a parent who may not love you, or a charming salesman whose pearly whites are fake and hide shark-like spikes that he uses to eat children? I think we are trying to explore all the different kinds of fears and see how they play off one another."

A true and significant exploration of themes takes time, however, and Tuft

and Snyder are more than willing to take things slowly in order to immerse the reader in the world they've created. While some comics amp up the blood and gore within the first few pages, *Severed* is content to gradually build to the horror. For example, the salesman doesn't even reveal his true self until the last page of the first issue. Rather, the first two issues concentrate more on Jack's perilous journey, with the two characters yet to cross paths.



Severed: A story heavily influenced by fairy tales



While this may sound dull to some, Tuft and Snyder's excellent writing and strong attention to detail more than make up for any lack of blood. In addition, Afifa Futaki's sombre artwork permeates the book with a sense of oncoming dread, greatly increasing the tension. Tuft believes that this emphasis on mood and character, rather than cheap shocks, will ultimately prove more satisfying to the reader.

"I wanted to do a 'slow-burn' horror because the scares can be deeper and more emotional," he notes. "If you spend the time creating real characters with real hopes and real fears, and you get the reader to invest in these hopes and fears, then hopefully when you break out the horror, the story is already inside the reader and can cut much deeper." 🍷

The Third comic in the *Planet of the Living Dead* series, *Battle for the Planet of the Living Dead* shares only its main conceit with its predecessors: zombies in space. Kakeri Sigma, an Earth-colony planet in the distant future, is one huge industrial spaceship construction yard that's unexpectedly attacked by an off-world swarm of the living dead. Adams, a genuinely upbeat construction worker, fights off the zombie army while desperately trying to keep his optimism. Joe Wright and Rod Espinosa present a fast-paced, funny, gory and good-looking tale, but missed opportunities abound. Further exploration of the character of Adams, a happy-go-lucky dude surrounded by gloom and cynicism, would've been more interesting than turning him into a generic zombie-basher. There's enough material here to warrant at least another issue, and *Astorian* should rethink its policy of making the *PoD* books separate from each other – or at least make the stories longer.



Parole officer

Thomas Zerk is having a bad day. His ex-wife is keeping him from his two daughters, and his parolee has just become a vicious demon that tried to eviscerate him. Even worse, he's rescued by a strange




Mignola and John Arcudi taking time to reflect on the problems that the organization has had of late, especially regarding Abe Sapien and Liz Sherman. There's some nice quiet moments between monster attacks, which should serve

that, despite the monstrosities, Mignola's Hellverso continues to flourish because of its characters.

into — including a large blue creature — who claim that he's some kind of god. K&T breeds familiar ground: an everyman is thrust into a dangerous situation out of his control, he's confronted by a reality very different to what he's accustomed to and is subsequently told he must fulfill a prophecy. However, despite the gnawing sense of been-there, done-that, the book manages to move at a good clip and contains enough mystery to intrigue for at least one more issue.

Iwan Nazif's eye-pleasing art doesn't hurt either. Not a groundbreaking start to a series but an entertaining one nevertheless.





When the Bureau for Paranormal Research and Defense (BPRD) team head to Moscow to meet with the Russian Occult Bureau, they not only butt heads with their foreign counterparts, but must also contend with what look like killer Pillsbury Doughboys. *Hell on Earth: Russia* is a quality entry in the BPRD canon, with fantastic art from Tyler Crook, which finds writers Mike

In this four-colour adaptation of John Saul's six-part serialized novel, the old asylum in the town of Blackstone is about to be demolished. Five objects rescued from the building are bequeathed to five individuals, with devastating results. In this opening chapter, a doll is given to the McGuire family who must soon deal with a miscarriage and

the deadly obsession the grieving mother develops for the mysterious plaything. Bluewater is seemingly devoting one issue per object, just as the novel focused on one item per chapter, leaving little room for this inaugural issue to introduce the overarching storyline, the ongoing protagonists, the doll's story and the respective characters involved. It proves to be incredibly dense, and the constant flashbacks do little to help with the disorientation. Fans of Saul's book



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MONSTERS IN AMERICA: OUR HISTORICAL OBSESSION WITH THE HIDEOUS AND THE HAUNTING

W. Scott Poole
Baylor University Press

Nobody could be blamed for mistaking *Monsters in America* for a book that it is not. Whether this disconnect is the result of the title itself, or the scene of gnarled trees shrouded in an ominous fog that serves as its cover art, this is not some compendium of hauntings in the heartland or a personal eyewitness account of the antics of the Jersey Devil. Author (and history professor) W. Scott Poole has constructed a work that is as far more in-depth, scholarly and imaginative than any of the throwaway shock that fills the bargain bins of bookstores every autumn. Additionally, he's set the bar ridiculously high for any future research exploring the locus of historical and cultural studies, particularly as it pertains to the horrific.

Equal parts thoughtful and frightening, *Monsters in America* explores the darkest recesses of American history, using the distorted reflection of fictional monstrosities to tease out the true horror of the nation's unflattering past, ideologies, and political and religious nightmares — all uniquely suited to those shores. Poole writes: "Monsters are 'meaning machines,' excavating all manner of cultural productions, depending on their context and their historical moment. In American history they have been symbols of deviance, objects of sympathy, and even images of erotic desire. They structured the enslavement of African Americans, constructed notions of crime and deviance, and provided mental fodder for the culture wars of the contemporary period."

With *Monsters in America*, Poole has created an important text that serves as a clarion call for readers to examine the commonly accepted narrative of history that has been steadily spoon-fed to a people who want to — even need to — believe in the overt goodness of America. Monsters, Poole successfully argues, serve to pull back the membranous protective tissue of historical revisionism to reveal the charnel house of injustice and lies beneath. As Poole so eloquently puts it, "American exceptionalism and innocence are nothing but happy bedtime stories for children nightly afraid of the dark."

From Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* serving as a metaphor of slave rebellion, to the monstrous Saturday matinee mutations standing in for the horrors of the Love Canal tragedy, to the popularity of the Universal Monsters in the 1970s serving as an anchor for kids living through the "restructuring of American family demographics," *Monsters in America* challenges, enlightens and, quite honestly, frightens in its prescient view of American history, as well as the seeming ubiquity of the monsters of our past and probable future.

JESS PEACOCK

HOW TO DRAW CHILLER MONSTERS, WEREWOLVES, VAMPIRES, AND ZOMBIES

J. David Spurlock
Watson-Guptill

We've all seen those How to Draw books before and they're usually pretty basic, lacking a lot of in-depth artistic explanations. But *How to Draw Chiller Monsters, Werewolves, Vampires, and Zombies* is different. Author J. David Spurlock, an illustrator himself, takes this guide to another level by

covering everything an artist needs to know, from basic concepts through to expert techniques, from pop art to fine art, and from pencil sketches to digital masterpieces.

In the opening chapters, he demonstrates how important it is to understand art fundamentals before attempting to become a monster artist. The first step is to gain a basic understanding of form and structure, and he encourages everyone to simplify using basic shapes — be it cylinders, spheres or gravestones. A decent knowledge of figure drawing is next. It's essential to draw reality-based subjects and understand human anatomy before attempting monsters in order to create more believable representations. Perspective and foreshortening is equally important, as it gives dimension to the scene and can be used as a storytelling tool. Light, shadow, tone and texture are the last steps in creating a monster. Details such as flesh, fur, veins and blood are the icing on the cake.

The second half of the book covers drawing zombies, vampires and werewolves, using examples from famous monster masters, including Basil Gogos, Jack Davis, Kerry Gammit, Jim Steranko, Bernie Wrightson, David Hartman and Alex Horley. Here, we get an inside look into the process and techniques used by these artists. One of the many highlights is a step-by-step demonstration of the creation of Gogos' portrait of Boris Karloff as Frankenstein's monster. Spurlock goes on to discuss composition and design, as well as inking pencil drawings, and then the book's coda offers up yet another treat: Steranko's storyboards for *Brain Stoker's Dracula*.

Not only is this book extremely informative, it's also drop-dead gorgeous and overflowing with beautifully gruesome monster illustrations. For

THE GRIM READER

DEATH CASSET: ART OF UNCLE PIGORS

Eric Pigors

Self Published

Thumbing through one of Eric Pigors' books is much like emptying out a 'treat bag' on Halloween. It's stuffed with 140 pages of sickly sweet, colour-ful illustrations of the art he's created since 2007. His toxic monster looms infect T-shirt designs, album covers and art prints – you never quite know what might spill out. Limited to 190 copies, *Death Cassette* is signed and even comes with a witty death certificate. Grimly appropriate!

GARY PULLIN



THE GHOST HANDBOOK: AN ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO GHOSTS, SPIRITS, AND SPECTRES

Dr. Robert Curran

Barron's

This charming full-colour mini-volume begins with a short overview of the uneasy relationship between the living and the dead through history before getting into the real meat of the book. Illustrated accounts of real-life hauntings from around the world. At 80 pages, it doesn't offer much that's new to serious supernatural obsessives, but junior paranormal investigators will love it.

JUSTINE WARWICK



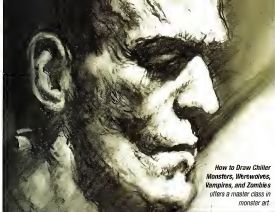
CLIFFORD THE BIG RED DOG

Kenneth Hill

Atlas Games

One can't help but sense an emerging trend when flipping through this mash-up of H.P. Lovecraft's 'The Dunwich Horror' and classic kids' book *Clifford the Big Red Dog*. Presented as an oversized children's picture book, youngsters may thrill (or quiver) at the multi-eyed Clifford monster, but the Chthonian mythos jokes are clearly aimed at adult readers, leaving us a little unsure of who exactly this book was made for.

MONICA S. KUEBLER



How to Draw Chiller Monsters, Werewolves, Vampires, and Zombies offers a master class in monster art.

PAIGE REYNOLDS

THE WALKING DEAD: RISE OF THE GOVERNOR

Robert Kirkman and Jay Bonansinga

St. Martin's

If the road to hell is paved with good intentions, then hell itself is built on their outcome. We know the post-apocalyptic zombie hell of Robert Kirkman's *The Walking Dead* comic book series well, so now it's time to travel down some of the roads that led there. In the first *Walking Dead* novel, *Rise of the Governor*, Kirkman and co-writer Jay Bonansinga (*Frozen*, *Shattered*, *Perfect Victim*) reveal the back story of the series' heaviest heavy, Philip Blake. Known as The Governor, he was the raping, murdering psycho who lorded over the Woodbury settlement and pitied humans against zombies for sport. He also kept his zombie daughter chained up and well-fed on the flesh of his enemies, and he's the brutal bastard who chopped off the hand of our hero, Rick Grimes.

Rise of the Governor tells of his Darth Vader-style journey from man to monster, as Blake leads his family of survivors through the rotter-infested wasteland of Georgia. The blue-collar tough guy is accompanied by his young daughter, wimpy older brother Brian and two best friends from high school, Nick and Bobby. The trip takes them from the suburbs to heavily infested Atlanta, and into the countryside in search of sanctuary from not just the insatiable zombies, but also a gang of murderous drug addicts, some unhinged military men, a constant lack of supplies and the unforgiving elements.

Although somewhat episodic and every bit as grim, bloody and action-packed as the comic, the authors make the most of the novel format by adding plenty of colour. The descriptions of the smells of a zombie-choked city, for example, are effectively stomach-churning and add a new dimension to the horror. Kirkman and Bonansinga are also careful to make our protagonist's heartbreaking mental degradation believably gradual. Prolonged, shocking horror, seemingly insurmountable obstacles and constant deprivation make the world of *The Walking Dead* burn, and they're in full effect here.

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THE IRREAL WORLD

BY CHRIS JOZEFOWICZ

WHEN ASKED TO DESCRIBE CHÔMU PRESS, EDITOR QUENTIN S. CRISP FIRST RELATES AN OLD TAQIBT TALE: "Chuang Tse falls asleep and dreams that he is a butterfly. He wakes up and he's not sure whether he's just dreamt he was a butterfly or if he's a butterfly now dreaming he is Chuang Tse."

Crisp's London, England-based publishing house aims to capture this sense of disquiet with its growing collection of unsettling fiction. The name Chômu refers to a Japanese version of that old story: "Translated literally it means 'butterfly dream,'" he explains. Furthermore, the imprint's slogan, "new vistas of unreality," is a deliberate misquote of an H.P. Lovecraft line from "The Call of Cthulhu."

"Near the opening of [the story] there is the phrase 'vision of reality,' so it's just a sly twist on that," Crisp says. "But I think that horror and reality do have a connection. Maybe not so much in the traditional good-versus-evil sense, but in stuff like H.P. Lovecraft and Arthur Machen there is a sense of really trying to get under the surface of reality and what's behind the appearance of the world."

Since it was established in 2010, Chômu Press has released a dozen books that deploy a range of styles to disturb and delight fans of mind-expanding fiction. Of particular note are Reggie Oliver's novel *The Dracula Papers*, a "Gothick Extraneousness" that imagines the life of Vlad the Impaler, Mark Samuels' *The Man Who Collected Machen*, featuring stories in the tradition of Lovecraft and Machen, and Justinisis' debut, *I Wonder What Human Flesh Tastes Like*, a collection of surreal and unnerving stories set in modern Japan that Crisp impressionistically describes as "robots working in order to attain religious experience."

Chômu's most recent book, Joseph S. Pulver's *The Orphan Palace* (out now), continues to push wilderness in unexpected directions by mixing a narrative popu-

lated by ghosts and demon hounds with best poetry and hard-boiled detective fiction. The noir tale follows a mysterious man named Cardigan on a road trip from California to Massachusetts to revisit the orphanage where his youth was brutally stolen. Like many heroes, Cardigan is on a mission that is part detective work and part justice (or revenge). However, unlike them, Cardigan's trek also seems to be part psychotic break. He stumbles through a nightmarish landscape crawling with

monks—including a couple of well-armed witch hunters, a talking rat and a merman—while leaving a trail of bodies and burnt-out buildings in his wake. Pulver portrays the journey in macabre poetry, wherein a corpse is "pale coffin food" and the setting sun will "bleed to death in the arms of the horizon."

"It's a book that takes risks," Crisp notes. "Pulver goes on these great flights of fantasy and you wonder if it's going to come crashing to the ground, but he does it anyway. I like that."

Pulver's fractured narrative parallels his anti-hero's fractured mind. Just as Cardigan searches through pulp detective novels and his own fever dreams for clues on his quest, readers will find themselves seeking meaning in the slew of horror references offered up in the book, which include nods to literary luminaries such as Frank Belknap Long and Thomas Ligotti, popular genre comic books and filmmakers John Carpenter and David Lynch. Sometimes the "a-ha!" moment that makes sense of the chaos feels like it is forever just a page-turn away, while at other times the only appropriate response to the mystery is to recognize that the world of the novel is a perverted cacophony of strange nightmare logic.

It goes without saying that *The Orphan Palace* is not mainstream fare. Still, the works of Pulver, as well as other Chômu authors such as Oliver and Samuels, thrive in the realm of small independent presses and limited runs, where they are gobbled up by a dedicated fan base.

"There's a kind of ghetto situation with a particular scene," Crisp says. "Some people call it literary horror or 'the new weird.' In this kind of situation the ghetto is you're not straight literature but you're not straight genre, either. There are only a few publishers who really know how to deal with you."

To help Chômu's books get wider exposure, Crisp is utilizing new avenues of publication. All of the company's titles are issued as both downloadable eBooks and print-on-demand hard copies. But there's another ghetto that Crisp seems determined to demolish as well. This one is in the minds of readers whose long-established genre expectations often go unchallenged.

"Weird has become, in a sense, a closed genre," says Crisp, who hopes that stories such as *The Orphan Palace* will help break fans of the eldritch free. "People think they know what it means now. But if you think you know what something is, then it's no longer weird." ☛



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TRUE BLOOD BLUES

I'm not a purist when it comes to adaptations. Firms have their own storytelling requirements and elements often have to be revised, rethought or reflowed in order for the translation to be effective (e.g., Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*). In television, similar demands exist, dictated by budgets, number of episodes and the popularity of a series' cast members. Yet there's nothing stopping a show from matching or even exceeding its source material: *Dead* and *The Vampire Diaries* both do it regularly.

That's why the train wreck that was *True Blood* season four is so inexcusable. Until now, showrunner Alan Ball has taken a mostly respectful approach to adapting the Sookie Stackhouse novels — expanding their subplots, while more or less maintaining the narrative flow (here a season per book) and mythology as set out by author Charlaine Harris. Most successful adaptations function similarly: because the best screenwriters realize that the further they wander off the set path, the greater the risk they run of losing the essence of what made the source material so special and worth adapting in the first place.

With the exception of some of the characters, by the end of fourth season *True Blood* has become virtually unrecognizable from the books that spawned it, choosing sex opera melodrama, steamy sex scenes and hokey side plots (haunted baby, anyone?) over the lean, structured storytelling that makes Harris' books the page-turners they are. Is this what the network thinks that people want? Doubtful, seeing as season four was the first to lose viewers instead of gaining them during its thirteen-episode run (the premiere played to 5.42 million, while the finale drew only 5.05).

While no one is going to argue that Harris' novels are great literature, they are very deliberate in their execution, not only delving out new supernatural entities and vampire politics in a restrained manner, but also building complex character relationships full of trickery and interpersonal power plays (particularly between Eric and Sookie) over the course of several books. This is good storytelling, unlike throwing everything at the wall all at once to see what sticks and compromising the believability of your characters to offer audiences more software smut and instant gratification intrigue — not excess — is what keeps us coming back.

Jettisoning much of Harris' tried-and-true mythology is equally foolish. As a result, we get painfully clichéd reawakening witches and ill-advised visits to the fairy realm, instead of intense werewolf leadership showdowns and a damn cool subplot wherein a bitten Jason becomes part-werewolf and eventually joins their community.

People always say, "Don't worry, the source material still exists," and while this is certainly true, I don't think anyone enjoys watching something they love being played on. *Dead to the World*, one of the best novels in Harris' series, deserved better.

MONICA S. KUEHLER

Bonessings's prose (let's assume Kirkman was tied up with the actual series and the TV adaptation) is economical, punchy and fast-paced, making *Rise of the Governor* a true page-turner, and the perfect way to expand the epic scope of the franchise.

DAVE ALEXANDER

FLOATING STAIRCASE

Ronald Malfi
Mediotion

At first glance, *Floating Staircase* seems like a prototypical ghost story: a couple moves into a new house, strange things start happening, one believes in ghosts, the other thinks that's crazy. While this motif has been used to structure many horror novels over the decades, Ronald Malfi seems aware that it takes more than a few bumps in the night to surprise an audience and set a story apart.

Horror novelist Travis Glasgow, along with his wife Jodie, leaves city life behind in favour of relocating to a small mountain town closer to his brother, Adam. Shortly after moving into their new home, Travis finds a hidden room — a child's bedroom — behind a handprint that appears over a bike wall in his basement. As he investigates the origins of this chamber, he learns that it belonged to the previous owner's nephew, Elijah, who died in a lake accident years before.

Since Travis also had a sibling who died in a lake accident decades earlier (something he feels completely responsible for), and since Elijah's spirit seems to be agging him on, he becomes increasingly obsessed with the room and the holes in the dead boy's story. All the while Adam and Jodie grow increasingly concerned about the state of Travis' physical and mental health, noticing that he loses himself for hours in Elijah's old room (while thinking he's only been in there a few minutes).

Malfi is writing from the perspective of a horror novelist, which allows Travis a bit more insight into his situation than your typical hero. As such, he often humorously comments on his own reactions to spooky events, contrasting them with characters he has written or read about who are in similar situations. Malfi's ability to successfully juggle two parallel plots (slowly revealing Travis' brother's death as Travis learns more about Elijah's) while also capturing the complex nature of his protagonist's tumultuous relationship with his family, results in a thoughtful, multilayered tale that offers much more psychological depth than it would seem to at the outset.

JESSA SOBCZUK

SOUTHERN GOOS

John Honor Jacobs
Night Shade

Part pulpy detective story, part Lovecraftian horror, John Honor Jacobs' debut novel *Southern Goats* is a promising, if slightly unbalanced, first effort, but there's no question this well-written gumshoe noir deserves to put him on every horror fiction fan's radar.

Set in Memphis during the early 1950s, hulking WWII vet Lewis "Bull" Ingram is hired by a local radio producer to find the station's missing publicist and a mysterious bluesman named Rambler. John Huston, whose dark, haunting songs incite primal, violent reactions from anyone within earshot. Stranger, the malevolent melodies have only been heard on a phantom radio station that inexplicably moves throughout the dial. The trail leads Bull to the dusty backroads of Arkansas, where a secondary plotline involving a young woman named Sarah takes shape.

Fresh from fleeing her abusive husband, Sarah has returned to her childhood home, with her daughter in tow, to get centred among old family friends while tending to her ailing mother. As Bull draws closer to the otherworldly truth of Rambler's John's devilish ditties, Sarah learns her mother's increasingly wolf-like appearance is only the latest clue to her family's black magic-streaked history. Before long, and after one of the book's most insane sequences — in which a Rambler John concert turns a bar scene into an explicit orgy of blood, guts, gore and ritualistic hacking — the two parties become fatefully entangled in a sickening melée of human sacrifices, heart eating and corpse violation as ancient demon gods known as The Old Ones aim to take human form after centuries of lying in wait.

In much the same occult vein as William Hjortsberg's 1978 novel *Falling Angel* (later adapted into the 1987 film *Angel Heart*), *Southern Goats* only suffers in the first third, when Jacobs unnecessarily rushes to shoehorn in a romantic subplot between the two main characters, while also turning the heat up overly quickly on the pressure cooker he'd been gradually building over the first 200 pages. Chalk it up to either a rookie mistake or an overzealous editor. Regardless, the race to the finish doesn't mar this excellent supernatural introduction to a very promising new horror writer.

TREVOR TURNISKI



TRAVELOQUE OF TERROR

FIESTA DE LAS ÑATITAS—LA PAZ, BOLIVIA

BY PAUL ROLDUMARIS



Bundled up against the early morning November chill, I had taken a cab to Cementerio General (Cemetery General) in La Paz, Bolivia, to witness one of the world's most extraordinary celebrations of the dead, the *Fiesta de las Ñatitas*. It has been hailed by its adherents as "a celebration of life" and derided by its detractors as "a pagan spectacle," but regardless of how one describes it, the *Ñatitas* is completely unique. The annual festival is held every November 8, and attracts some 10,000 people, most of whom come to the cemetery carrying garishly decorated human skulls, or *ñatitas* (which means "pug-nosed ones," in reference to the skull's shape). Normally kept in small shrines in the homes of their adherents, the skulls are considered receptacles for the souls of the deceased, which provide spiritual assistance, protection and companionship to the living. The *Ñatitas* is held to give thanks, as well as blessings and

offerings to ensure that the skulls will continue to serve the living for another year.

As I arrive at the cemetery gates, I meet Maria Mendoza, who is standing near the entrance holding a velvet-lined box containing a skull crowned in a floral wreath. She is typical of the people who are gathered for the *Ñatitas*.

"His name is Guillermo," she reveals, unveiling her skull, "and he has been with me for fourteen years. I live alone, and he protects my house when I am not at home. He communicates with me through dreams; Guillermo's connection to the spirit world gives him great knowledge of many things I could not otherwise know, and I would never make an important decision without his input—I consider him to be my advisor."

Meanwhile, Jose Rodrigo Mamani, an international businessman, stops to introduce me to Santa Lucia. He has owned this *ñatita* for 45 years and credits it with his professional success. He's aware that outsiders might scoff, but explains that, "in our traditional belief system, the body may deteriorate but the life force remains. The world of the living and the dead are not so separate—there is a communication and a negotiation between the two. Throughout the year, Santa Lucia looks out for me, she provides me with good fortune, and, on November 8, we all gather here to give something in return."

The origins of the belief in the *ñatitas* are unclear, they've undoubtedly rooted in ancient indigenous customs, which were later fused with Catholic ideas about souls in Purgatory, but it's impossible to ascertain exactly when the modern practice started. By the early 20th century there were reports of Indians in small villages keeping skulls in their homes, and venerating them in yearly celebrations in local cemeteries. The custom of that time was not practiced on a large scale, and even in La Paz it remained a mere footnote in local religious culture through the 1980s. Within the last two decades, though, the popularity of the *ñatitas* has grown exponentially, apparently spurred by migrations of people from small towns, who brought these kinds of traditional beliefs with them. They apparently found fertile ground in a city that has always had a notable esoteric subculture. (Among other things, La Paz possesses the world's largest witchcraft market.) The metamorphosis of the *Fiesta de las Ñatitas* has seen the celebration of the skulls grow to become one of the largest—and by far the most colorful. Additionally, the belief in

the skulls now crosses all walks of life. The *Ñatitas* brings people from the lowest classes together with successful businessmen and physicians.

During the *Ñatitas*, the skulls are brought out in high style. They are decorated with flowers to give them a festive appearance, and given ample supplies of cigarettes, alcohol and coca leaves. As with any loved one, special care is taken to ensure their comfort—the skulls frequently arrive on cushions, or in specially built caskets, something like miniature sedan chairs. Their owners often cover their craniums in watch caps to ward off the morning cold, and sometimes even provide sunglasses to prevent them from being bothered by the glare of the bright Andean sun—the cotton balls frequently seen in the empty sockets of the skulls are meant to stimulate eyes and provide the spirits with sight.

The lineup outside the cemetery gates starts around 8 a.m. and when the grounds are opened to the public a half an hour later, there's a rush towards the cemetery's small chapel. I squeeze my way in, as adherents jockey for position, attempting to place their skulls as close to the altar as possible, so they can hear the priest preside over the service and offering blessings. Since the Catholic Church officially condemns the cult of the *ñatitas* as being a pagan practice, the priest is careful to point out to me that he does not bless the skulls themselves, but simply offers an oration for the dead in general. This distinction is largely lost on most of the *ñatitas* owners, however, who consider their skulls to be sanctified by the ceremony. After the service, I adjourn with the rest of the congregation to the cemetery grounds, where wandering musicians perform to edify the dead, while the faithful go from skull to skull offering flowers, and gawkers from around the world watch with equal parts awe and confusion.

Among the most obvious questions I have for the celebrants are how their skulls were acquired, and what of their former identities? In some cases, a *ñatita* may authentically be a relative whose skull has become something along the lines of a family relic. I find Patricia Alagna sitting up a small shrine for the skull of her grandfather, Ramon. She shores his skull with her sisters and cousins—they keep him for a month at a time and then transfer him to another relative. She considers the skull to be a bond that unifies the family.

"He was a great and caring man, and without him our family would not exist," she explains. "And shor-



ing his skull, each of us are still tied together through him; it is a form of unity.

In most cases, however, the *flabita* is neither a relative nor even a person that had been known by the living, but rather an anonymous skull that has been acquired. Often it is not until some time later that its identity is revealed through a dream. The skulls may be obtained through any number of means. Some celebrants explain to me that they acquired theirs from medical students, while a few admit they'd stolen them from archaeological sites (these are believed to have superior powers due to their age and pre-Columbian origins).

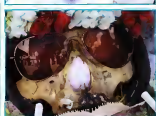
By far the most common means of acquiring a *flabita*, though, is through the labourers at the cemetery itself. Burial space in the *Cementerio General* is typically not purchased outright, but occupied on what amounts to a rental basis. Yearly dues are required for the spots and its upkeep, and if a person's relatives should ever default, the deceased is evicted and its bones removed. When this happens, the labourers will take the skull and sell it off. Such was the case with the *flabita* Guillermo, whom Mendoza introduces me to as we wait for the chaos to open. When she purchased the skull from a cemetery worker fourteen years ago, it cost the equivalent of ten US dollars – but this, she hastens to point out, is not a small amount of money in Bolivia. Once acquired, it took several months of cooing before the skull warmed to her.

"I placed it in a box, along with cigarettes. But I felt nothing, there was no connection," she says. "I tried coca leaves and other things people usually offer the skulls. Finally, I placed candy in the box with them, and then I started having dreams, and he revealed an identity to me. So I realized he likes candy. Now I put a few candies out every week, and he has served me faithfully the entire time."

Sitting in the cemetery with Guillermo's bony jaw and skeletal sockets peering out from the box by her side, Mendoza realizes it is hard for outsiders to understand the phenomenon of the *flabitas*.

"They think it is macabre, or that we are celebrating death," she explains. "That's not true. It's about life, and the connection between the living and the dead. In that connection, there is power. That is what we celebrate, because the connection is profound."

Cementerio General is located near the centre of La Paz, and is accessible via private taxi and public transportation – look for minibuses with the word "*Cementerio*" written on the windshield. On November 8, the day of the *Fiesta*, the cemetery opens at 8:30 a.m., and remains open throughout the day. ♡



Day Of The Dead Heads: (clockwise from top) *flabitas* bearing protection and offerings, Maria Mendoza with "Guillermo," sunglasses shield the *flabitas* from the sun, the owners of "Miguelito" claim he cured their daughter's infertility, a skull that allegedly channels the soul of a widow's deceased husband, and (opposite) a *flabita* believed to be from a Uruguayan man that's been decorated in the colours of his homeland's flag.



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THE GORE MET

MENU: A HANKERING FOR HENENLOTTER

Nobody was better suited to make *The Godfather of Gore*, the documentary on unabashed exploitation filmmaker H.G. Lewis (who I profiled last issue), than Frank Henenlotter, who considers being classified as an exploitation filmmaker a badge of honour because, as he puts it, "it's a broader category and it's significantly less respectable."

Readers of this space should be familiar with his films *Basket Case* (1982), *Brain Damage* (1988) and *Frankenhooker* (1990), as they are nothing less than essential viewing for the discerning gorehound. They're crude, hilarious, over-the-top, and starting to sizzle out on Blu-ray.

Along with *The Godfather of Gore*, Something Weird Video also recently released Henenlotter's 42nd Street classic and '80s video store staple *Basket Case*, with a new transfer from the 16 mm camera negatives and almost all of the extras from the previous DVD release.

The story is wildly original. Duane (Kevin Van Hienforydyk) and his detached, deformed Siamese twin Bellal, who he carts around hidden in a wicker basket, take up residence in a fleabag hotel in Times Square while they track down and kill the quack doctors who surgically separated them. Meanwhile, the eccentric residents of the Hotel Brooklyn want to know: what's in the basket? We want to know, where'd the story come from?

"I was just running off a bunch of titles in my head and one of them I came up with real fast was *Basket Case*," Henenlotter recalls. "The moment I thought of that, I immediately came up with a visual of a guy walking around with a malignant, jack-in-the-box, this basket that has a monster loop out of it. The visuals were so funny I was flooded with ideas: put him in a sidewalk hotel,

have people open the basket and get eaten — it just cracked me up. What I didn't know was why the hell anyone was walking around with a monster in



a basket, and I couldn't lick that one for a while. I thought, 'What if they were twins, and one of them is a deformed Siamese twin?' and the whole script fell into place right there."

One of the charms of *Basket Case* is the deft balance of horror and comedy, which Henenlotter admits came out of necessity.

"One of the things I learned on 42nd Street was keep 'em laughing as much as you keep 'em screaming," he explains.

"When I realized we had no money to make the film with, I figured that if I tried to play this thing absolutely seriously, I'd get laughed off the screen, but if I let people know in the beginning I was also laughing along with them, we could work together."

In bringing *Basket Case* to hi-def, Henenlotter had one specific goal: authenticity. Any dirt, specks or hairs found on the negative during restoration were cleaned off, those in the negative stayed in, as they were "part of the film from day one." And, as the director explains, to say that the gooey gore and anti-metric effects have never looked better wouldn't just be a complimentary turn of phrase.

"I wanted to make it look like the 16 mm original that I shot, which no one has seen," he attests. "Distributors saw it, but the public never did. I remember when I was making *Basket Case* I thought that if nothing else works, at least it's bright and colourful. And those are two words you'd never use to describe *Basket Case* whether you saw it in the theatre or on VHS. The theatrical print was disastrous. It was way too dark, it had additional grain, it had additional dirt—it was horrible. Now with HD, I was absolutely able to go back and recreate how that film looked before it was blown up to 35 mm."

This isn't the last we'll be seeing of Henenlotter either. Aside from three film projects he's trying to secure funding for, he and his filmmaking partners have another Something Weird documentary in the works called *That's Sexploitation*, which he describes as "a visual history of 40 years of non-Hollywood sex in the cinema, from theatrical prints down to arcade loops and peepshow things."

"I'm most proud of the work we've done with Something Weird," elaborates Henenlotter. "We've rescued and restored hundreds of films that I'm sure the rest of the world wishes we had left lost and abandoned, but it's very exciting to do that stuff. I think it's cool that our first three Blu-rays were *Basket Case*, *The Godfather of Gore*, and [a collection that included] *Blood Feast*, *Two Thousand Maniacs*, and *Color Me Blood Red* all on one disc."





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REVIEWS BY DAVE ALEXANDER, THE GORMET, MARK B. HANSEN, GEORGE PACEDLO, SEAN PLUMMER, JARED STORRY AND TREVOR TUMSKO



SUPER 8

Michael Giacchino
Various Soundtracks

For Super 8, director J.J. Abrams' homage to the kid-friendly shockers of the '80s, Michael Giacchino immerses himself in his own musical nostalgia so effectively that he's written the best John Williams horror score of the era that Williams never wrote himself. The Academy Award-winning composer pulls it off because of his knack for writing searing, tragic themes with gushing strings and absolutely terrifying shock music using simple yet elegant tricks (such as his patented warping brass effect). Super 8, not unlike Giacchino's music for *TV's Lost*, is designed around two stark, contrasting themes: a saccharine, feel-good piece ("Family Matters") that eventually gets spun into gushing emotional waves of intricately orchestrated strings, and the eight-note menace theme, which is reconfigured into both small and epic variations. He includes a few light touches, but most importantly he nails the terrifying perspective of a child who knows of the amorphous dangers that could spring from a dark closet at any moment. **MNH 3.5/5**



FINAL DESTINATION 5

Brian Tyler
Various Soundtracks

Brian Tyler's second score for the franchise doesn't reuse Shirley Walker's theme, but he's adopted the same slow-burning intensity that made the original *Final Destination* score a genre

classic. In *FD4*, Tyler threw the entire orchestra at the audience (often with heavy thematic repetition), but this time—either because the film's music budget allowed for more score, or Varese was generous in offering up 69 minutes of meaty cues—it's all about paranoia, confronting death and the mounting fear of who's next. The first third introduces kinetic brass and percussion material for the opening montages of carnage, and then settles into a great set of contrasting cues, pervasive strings covering primal fear and short thematic statements as dives for the suddenly departed. Aside from sporadic rock-oriented cues, Tyler sticks to a disturbingly quiet, meandering tone before his fantastic orchestral finale that celebrates Death's unstoppable power. A fine entry in this guilty pleasure franchise. **MNH 3.5/5**



KOFFIN KATS/12 STEP REBELS

From Dar Hands to Yours
Various Soundtracks

It's Kats vs. Rebels on the *From Dar Hands to Yours* split, and when the dust settles you can bet both slap-happy bands will need fresh bass strings. Detroit's Koffin Kats start things off with six songs that cover familiar psychobilly ground: drinking, partying and monsters. Driven by the haunted crooning and fast-peaced stand-up bass of Vic Victor, these guys really kick it wicked on the catchy, Cramps-influenced future classic "Werewolf Syndrome." The last six tracks come courtesy of New Mexico's 12 Step Rebels, who hang their hooks on Jakob Insane's punk rock snarl. Extra points for writing songs about Sleepy Hollow and La Llama, but they can't quite match the Kats on an album that sees neither band pushing the proverbial envelope. Both groups seem to be having a blast, though (even covering one of each other's monster-themed tracks), which

helps make for a somewhat meaty monster brawl.

DA 3.5/5



THE PHANTOM CREEPS

Hellbilly Rebel Fire
Various Soundtracks

Despite being named after a 1939 Bela Lugosi serial, there's very little creepy or weird about Lethbridge, Alberta-based rockabilly trio The Phantom Creeps. But just as Lugosi's series was really just a G-men adventure with only a very tangential relationship to horror, Hellbilly Rebel Fire features a lot of talk about the Devil, but you never really smell the brimstone coming off of these barely ghoulish grooves. Singer and stand-up bassist Tyler "Diablo" Brownfield certainly earns his nickname, conjuring Old Nick on numerous tracks, including "Cross the Line" ("It's just you and me, and the Devil makes three"), the uninspired "Outlaw Heart" and the weak-ass Social Distortion riff "Devil's Game." The band's ventures into old-time country (the title track and "Blood

on the Tracks") are the most sincere, but Hellbilly Rebel Fire is more bad than truly evil, stringing together country and rock clichés not worthy of selling one's soul for. **SP 3.5/5**



ZOMBIE INC.

A Dreadful Decease
Various Soundtracks

While the album title is either an intentional (and horrible) play on words or a hilariously disastrous typo, Austria's Zombie Inc. delivers death metal the old-school way on its full-length debut. Gargantuan Gerald Huber and Wolfgang Rothbauer tune way down low and keep it simple so as not to dizzy up the arrangements, which incorporate the prerequisite pore and horror-magazines, lending the band's brutal, off-heavy sound an ultra-sick cinematic edge. The results, as evidenced on such pummeling cuts as "Hordes Unleashed," are ultimately successful, with Zombie Inc.—at their best—sounding like the bastard son of Bolt Thrower and Blood Red

VIDEO DROME

FANTÔMAS

The Director's Cut Live:
A New Year's Revolution

Various Soundtracks

It's been ten years since Fantômas released its 2001 collection of regurgitated film themes, *The Director's Cut*. And just as the supergroup's thematic albums are considered "events" by their worshippers, so too should this concert DVD (and audio-only download). Filmed on New Year's Eve 2008, musical wildcard Mike Patton (Faith No More), Trevor Dunn (Mr. Bungle) and Melvyn Buzz Osborne and Cole Crover (the latter filling in for Slayer skinsman Dave Lombardo) waver from gentle and crooning to frenzied and downright terrifying as they tear through every one of *The Director's Cut*'s liberal renderings of signature tunes from *Night of the Hunter*, *Cape Fear*, *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Omen*, among others. Excessive visual post-FX (such as motion blurring and faux grind-house degradation) will irritate those not accustomed to Fantômas' inclination to tweak the nose of convention, but the devoted will not up this visual document of Patton's crazed vocal gymnastics and the surgical precision of the band's cinematic slaughtering. **TT 3.5/5**

PROMOTING THE FIRST
ANTHRAX ALBUM
OF NEW MATERIAL IN
EIGHT YEARS, GUITARIST
SCOTT IAN
WOULD NATURALLY
RAATHER TALK ABOUT
ZOMBIES



AMONG THE LIVING

BY TREVOR TUMINSKI

SPEAKING WITH ANTHRAX'S SCOTT IAN, IT'S IMMEDIATELY CLEAR THE GUITARIST DOESN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT ALL THE FUSS IS ABOUT REGARDING THE GROUP'S RECENTLY RELEASED TENTH STUDIO EFFORT, *WORSHIP MUSIC* (OUT NOW ON MEGAFORCE RECORDS).

Even though it marks the quintet's first album of original material since 2003's *We've Come for You All*, signals the return of vocalist Joey Belladonna, and has earned the band the second-highest chart debut of its career, he already seems tired of people trying to dissect the current incarnation of Anthrax or the quintet's latest accomplishment.

"To me, it's all Anthrax," Ian says, sighing. "People can analyze it 'til the end of time in terms of who does what, what sounds like what, how come this record sounds like this, who's better than who, and who brings what to the table. It doesn't matter to me. ... Any lineup change that's ever been made in this band is because it was the only way for the band to continue."

As the sole member of Anthrax to have consistently been on the roster since they formed in 1981, Ian is also reluctant to discuss the band's place alongside Metallica, Slayer and Megadeth in the continuing legacy of thrash metal's "Big Four." Though the groups have played festival shows together throughout 2010 and 2011, he downplays the notion that sharing the stage with such heavy-hitting peers had any effect on *Worship Music*, an album that many in the metal community are heralding as its best work since 1990's *Persistence of Time*.

"Most of the stuff was written before any of the Big Four shows even happened," says Ian, "so I can't say playing on these shows had any specific musical influence on the record, no."

After a couple more futile attempts to get Ian to trace how he, Belladonna, drummer Charlie Benante, bassist Frank Bello and lead guitarist Rob Caggiano executed an unexpected return to form, a switch to more homocentric questioning proves to be the icebreaker. While Anthrax has never been an outright "horror band," Ian—who is also the

band's lyricist—has frequently drawn upon the genre for songs such as "Among the Living" and "A Skeleton in the Closet" (inspired by Stephen King's *The Stand* and *Apt Pupil*, respectively), an ode to *Twin Peaks* called "Black Lodge," and their latest, "Fight 'em 'til You Can't," *Worship Music*'s first single, about a full-on zombie killing spree.

"Horror is just a genre that I love so much and I found a way to write about it without it being cornball or cheesy," he explains, audibly lightening up. "It's a look into the unknown. It's a look into another possible reality. I'm open to all ideas and I'm very good about suspending my disbelief about things. For me, ever since I was a little kid, I obviously understood that these things didn't exist but there's a big part of me that kind of wishes that they do."

Ian has foiled in horror outside of music too, having written issues of DC comic book series *Lobo* and *The Demon* (of which he's currently working on a new installment, with Sam Keith handling art), and most recently, living out his lifelong dream of being made up as a zombie, for a *Walking Dead* website that aired last month.

"If it was literally just getting made up, having a prosthetic taken and then taking the makeup off, I would've been happy," he says. "But actually getting to be in a scene, having Greg Nicotero direct it and having his team make me up? Unless they had told me Tom Savini was coming in to do it, personally, it doesn't get any better."

The guitarist says he definitely didn't need any pointers when it came to the intricacies of a convincing zombie walk. Having conducted "a lot of reading up on the zombie research society websites"—seriously, the guy even considered the rate of decay and confidently concluded he would need two years' worth of food and water to survive a potential zombie epidemic—he claims he simply relied on instinct when performing his shuffle for *The Walking Dead*'s resident undead expert.

"I was able to bend my foot all the way over so it literally looked like it was sideways and broken," he explains, with a chuckle. "I walked for the guy and he said, 'I have no notes. You were perfect.' And I was like, 'Dude, I was born to do this. I've been waiting for this my whole life. There's no way I'm gonna blow it!'"



now playing

NOW PLAYING > DEAD ISLAND, THE BINDING OF ISAAC, BLOODRAVE: BETRAYAL, CTRULHU CLUM, ZOMBIE SMARTS



DEAD ISLAND

Xbox 360, PS3, PC
Deep Silver, Rockband

Dead Island may well be a game doomed by its own hype. If you get gamers talking, you better live up to what they're saying. And *Dead Island* does — to a point. The tropical setting is undeniably

arresting and the half-naked zombies appropriately icky, but the graphics themselves could be both sleeker and gooser. And while there's definitely a heightened feeling of realism when playing, whether that makes for a better game is debatable.

Once you've chosen your character (who excels at a form of melee or ranged combat), you are deposited into the outbreak. A tutorial runs you through the basics: hitting, kicking, jumping, looting, swapping weapons and operating your flashlight, then it's time to help people work towards the common goal of surviving and escaping the island. The game mechanics feel a lot like those of *Dead Rising*, particularly in regards to eating and drinking to regain health, commandeering vehicles for transport and mayhem, and using a workbench to manufacture more deadly weapons (spiked cudgels, flaming batons and various explosives, among them), but on the whole, *Dead Island* is a lot less frenetic and over-the-top. On the fictional Isle of Banoi, good weaponry is hard to come by, as are blueprints to build it. To keep what you have in good work-



ing order, you'll need to fix and upgrade it regularly. For that you'll need lots of money, which can be acquired by completing quests and searching the various containers and corpses littered throughout the deserted vacation paradise. It'll also tend to keep an eye on your stamina bar because fighting drains it (though you can kick forever, so when all else fails there's always curbstamping).

The game keeps things tense through a combination of eerie ambient sounds and howling flesh-eaters that sound closer than they are. To further unsettle, zombies often leap out from unlikely places or come barreling at you at impossible speeds. With this range of things unpredictable, *Dead Island* is really a lot of the same: get quest, fight zombies, complete quest, repeat. There's nothing wrong with that and bashing brains is always fun, but it's not exactly reinventing the subgenre as promised either.

MONICA S. KUEBLER



HEADSHOTS: LONG PLAYTHROUGH TIME, GOOD UPGRADE SYSTEM, WTA/DS/ONLINE CHAT PLAY
MINUS: UNEVEN VOICE ACTING, REPETITIVE COMBAT, SLIGHTLY BUSHY QUEST GUIDE



THE BINDING OF ISAAC

PC, Mac
Edmund McMillen

If you have mommy issues — and according to Freud, you do — then *The Binding of Isaac* may be your perfect game. If you also enjoy sentient piles of guts, *The Legend of Zelda* and getting your hainie handed to you over and over again, so much the better.

This \$5 downloadable game from Steam puts players in control of Isaac, a wee lad on the run since his mother, an orders from God, stripped him bare and started chasing him around the house with a butcher's knife (just on the Old Testament tale of Abraham and his son-turned-sacrifice). Isaac attempts to escape his fate by fleeing to the basement, where he must shoot his way through mangled mutants and dithering siblings. At the outset, projectile tears are his only weapon.

The basement dungeon and its monsters vary with each playthrough. The same applies to the huge range of power-ups that are essential to your success. Pits that heal you today may hurt you tomorrow, and potent items, such as the wire coat hanger that appears Isaac through the head and leads to an increase in the firing rate of tears, are abundant one session but absent during the next. These random, luck-based mechanics give rise to a just-one-more-go replayability, but mix in default keyboard controls that take some getting used to, and you get many rounds that feel downright punishing.

This all sounds very grim, but the game is executed with both charm and humor. And while a title featuring more entails, shit and deformity would be hard to find, this one's drawn with a sparkly-eyed cuteness. The Zelda-patterned dungeons and other retro flourishes only add to the whimsical mood. Gamers looking for a little old-school catharsis will find lots in *The Binding of Isaac*, the goriest grind against a smothering mother since *Dead Alice*.

CHRIS JOZEFOWICZ



HEADSHOTS: ABHORRABLE GORE DESIGN, ADDICTIVE GAMEPLAY
MINUS: CHALLENGING CONTROLS, SURPRISINGLY DEFICIENT AT TIMES



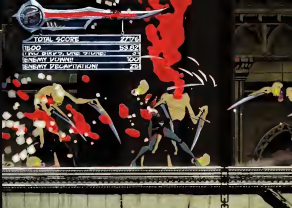
BLOODRAYNE: BETRAYAL

PS3, Xbox 360

Malaysia

Even though we're used to playing games that are consistently trying to outdo each other with the most photo-realistic characters, best, interactive environments and biggest maps, it's kind of nice to tackle a title that harkens back to the era of 2-D sidescrollers. And it's even better when the game in question totally kicks ass!

In *Bloodrayne: Betrayal*, players step into the thigh-high boots of the franchise's super-sexy, scarlet-haired vampiric as she leads a group of soldiers into a dilapidated castle fortress to hunt down and kill her diabolical father, Kagen. In order to accomplish this, you must traverse fifteen levels of frilly, crawl-wearing vampires, disgusting worm-like monstrosities, mutated frogs and a whole host of other creatures that might actually be scary if they weren't presented in such an anime style. And if dodging gigantic rotating saw blades, acid baths and steampunk bangers, such as a huge mechanical crab, wasn't fun enough, there's also a great new move that allows you to infect your enemies while feeding on them, turning them into walking bombs that you can detonate at will. To upgrade your health and ammo, you'll need to collect ancient vampire skulls that



can be traded for character improvements.

The biggest shortcomings here are the inappropriate sound-track, which has a wacky metal vibe to it, and the lack of voice acting, but these are ultimately minor complaints. *Bloodrayne: Betrayal* is a truly cool vampire game with plenty of replay value that only sucks in the good way.

ANDREW LEE



HEADSETS: FUN RETRO GRAPHICS, EASY CONTROLS, GREAT COMBO MOVES
MINUSES: REPETITIVE ENEMIES, NO VOICE ACTING, DUFFY-PLACE SOUNDTRACK



CTHULHU GLOOM: THE GAME OF UNSPEAKABLE INCIDENTS AND SQUAMOUS CONSEQUENCES

Card Game
Atlas Games

If you've played *Gloom*, you know how much fun it is to torture your imaginary family members before subjecting them to an untimely death. Atlas Games has now released an unspeakably twisted stand-alone version of the award-winning table-top card game, *Cthulhu Gloom*, offering an essential outlet for Lovecraft enthusiasts and gamers with a taste for cruel and unusual punishments.

Each player controls a "family" of five protagonists and takes turns drawing and casting modifier cards used to drive your family mad (Worried about Whip-poorwill?), make your opponent's family happy (Matriculated at Miskatonic) or kill a family member (Was Taken to Yuggoth). Lowest score — calculated by whoever has the most insane, dead family members at the end — wins.

While the list of modifiers is long and the rules intricate, it only takes a practice hand to get a hang of the fundamentals. With plenty of room to develop specialized strategies and twenty different family stories to choose from, this should keep you entertained until the Old Ones return.

JESSA SOBCHUK



HEADSETS: CLEAR MYLAR DECK, ADDS TO GAME STRATEGY
MINUSES: A FEW BODILY WORDED RULES CAN CAUSE GREAT DEBATE



ZOMBIE SMARTS: CLEAR YOUR MIND

Card Game
Smartisan

increase your grey matter rather than cause it to atrophy.

In *Zombie Smarts*, players show off their knowledge of the walking dead by tackling fun and interesting multiple choice and true-or-false questions about significant moments in the history of zombies, what you should do if someone is bitten by a zombie, what types of poisons can cause zombification, and which is smarter: a zombie or your pet dog? Questions are arranged in four different categories (Brain Eaters, Undead or Alive, Zombiophilia or ZombieMania) and are presented on beautifully illustrated full-colour heavy stock cards that are perfect for playing on road trips, camping or while sequestered in an underground shelter waiting out the Apocalypse.

Also included is a neat little score pad that'll help you keep track of how you are faring against your friends, and a twelve-page guidebook packed with interesting tidbits about your favourite skinbags. So if you think you know a thing or two about flesh-eaters, this is the game for you — it's both fun and infectious!

ANDREW LEE



HEADSETS: EDUCATIONAL, A GREAT TIME-WASTER
MINUSES: SOME OF THE QUESTIONS ARE REALLY CRYPTIC

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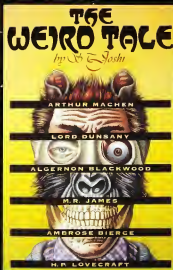
THE WEIRD TALE

S.T. JOSHI USA - 1990

Rue Morgue readers might be surprised to learn that horror fiction only became recognized as an academic subject in the late 1970s. Coinciding with the rise of feminist theories, the study of horror fiction first emerged in the form of "Gothic studies" (the term applied to dark and scary prose from the mid-18th to late 20th centuries). The examinations of horror fiction during this period were infused by the doctrines of feminism, psychoanalysis, Marxism, gender and queer studies, to name but a few. While valuable in themselves, many of the essays neglected or altogether dismissed significant authors whose works resisted analysis through one of these preordained theoretical lenses.

In 1990, Austin's University of Texas Press published S.T. Joshi's *The Weird Tale*, a study that was groundbreaking in several ways. It offered a detailed analysis of works by the six major classic horror writers: Arthur Machen, Lord Dunsany, Algernon Blackwood, M.R. James, Ambrose Bierce and H.P. Lovecraft. Joshi was, at that point, known predominantly as a Lovecraft scholar (a devotion which culminated in his masterful 1996 study *Lovecraft: A Life*). In *The Weird Tale*, he placed Lovecraft in the context of a larger literary tradition and examined authors of the "weird tale" who had crucially influenced him.

Joshi defined this kind of writing as separate from "the gothic" – less a genre than a "consequence of a world view." He claimed, "The weird tale offers unique opportunities for philosophical speculation – it could be said that the weird tale is an inherently philosophical mode in that it frequently compels us to address directly such fundamental issues as the nature of the universe and our place in it." Thus, his book was a then-unique study of the poetics and world view of the authors, who were up to that point rarely the subject of more than a few hasty paragraphs in other academic works. Of the six scribes covered, only Bierce had even a tentative foothold in critical discourse (more due to his Civil War experiences than to his horror stories). Lovecraft was mostly left to writings by fans, and as Joshi complained, "Machen, Dunsany and James are mere footnotes in English literature, and Blackwood not even that."



Joshi's approach was devoid of the forced ideological slant popular at the time; instead, his main concern was to understand the wholeness of these authors' work by examining their meta-physical, ethical and aesthetic theories, and how their fiction reflected these. His fresh perspective shed new light on the selected writers. By joining them together, he made obvious the connections that eluded previous scholars, especially in terms of the ontological or cosmic horror that pervades their best tales.

It was thanks to Joshi's pioneering book that a serious re-examination of what he (and Lovecraft) called the "weird tale" started. This resurgence is evident in the establishment of several publishing houses devoted specifically to fiction by and criticism of the writers that Joshi discussed in *The Weird Tale*. The best of these is Hippocampus Press, where Joshi continued to edit additional selections of essays about the six authors, while also publishing collections of their previously unavailable writings – accompanied by valuable notes, introductions and bibliographies. With *The Weird Tale*, he brought attention and ac-

sight to writers and works that had been frequently dismissed by academics, and created enough public demand to have them resurrected and re-released in new editions.

This did not end just a small press level, however. Joshi would subsequently be enlisted to edit prestigious editions of Lovecraft, Dunsany, Machen and James for Penguin Books. The fact that these writers are now available in accessible, fully annotated editions by a mass-market publisher is a direct result of *The Weird Tale*.

Joshi followed up his original study just over a decade later with 2001's *The Modern Weird Tale: A Critique of Horror Fiction*, which was distinguished by his dismissal of popular horror authors (such as Stephen King and Clive Barker) and praise of writers such as Shirley Jackson, T.E.D. Klein, Ramsey Campbell, Robert Aickman and other modern practitioners of truly philosophical horror.

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